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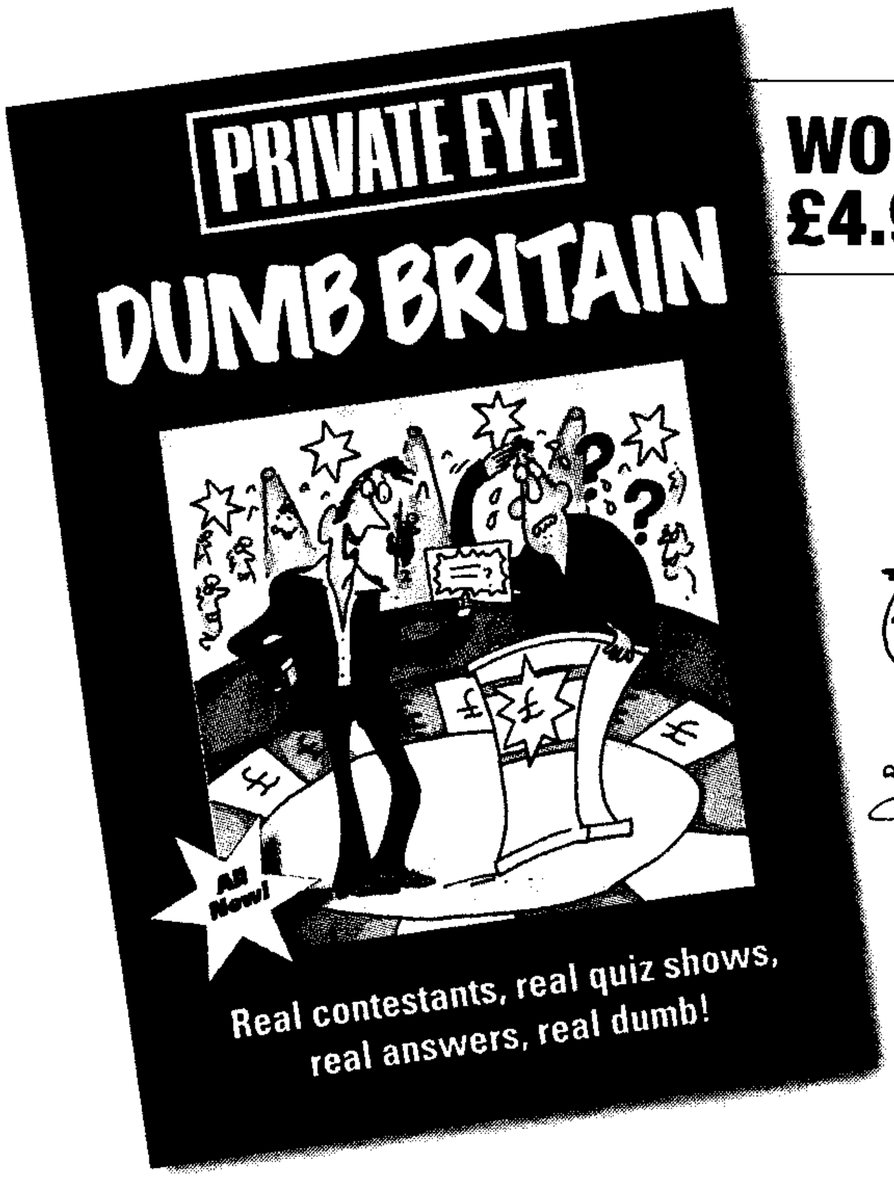

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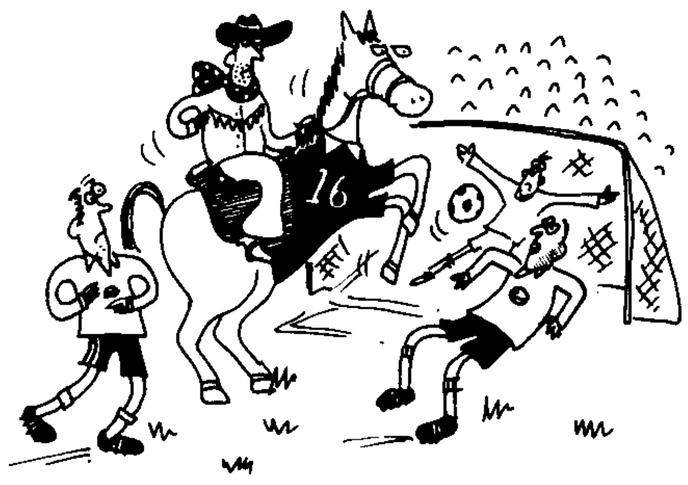

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CONTESTANT: Keane.
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Prince Harry
An Apology

IN COMMON with all other newspapers, we may in recent years have given the impression that we regarded Prince Harry as a drunken, useless, upperclass layabout whose single purpose in life was to hang around nightclubs, chase "totty" and indulge in loutish behaviour, often involving gentlemen of the press.

Headlines such as "Yes! It's Your Royal Lowness!", "Prince Charmless Punches Paparazzi" and "Born To Be Drunk" may have conveyed to our readers the idea that we in some way held the Prince in low esteem and viewed him as a degenerate wastrel not fit to hold a commission in Her Majesty's Armed Forces and a disgrace to his mother, St Diana of Hearts.

We now realise that there was not a jot or scintilla of truth whatsoever in any of the above. Furthermore, we now realise that Prince Harry is a role model for the nation's youth, a warrior prince in the mould of King Henry V and a credit to his country, his family and the memory of his late mother, Princess Diana of Calcutta.

Headlines from this week's press such as "Hero Harry Single-Handedly Defeats Taliban", "Welcome Home And God Bless You, Prince Valiant" and "Jordan's Knockers World's Biggest – It's Official!" have hopefully redressed any misunderstandings that may have arisen due to our earlier reports.

IN TOMORROW'S PAPER: ● ***How long before Harry falls off the wagon?*** **2**
● ***Lock up your daughters! Harry's back!*** **3**
● ***What now for the layabout Prince?*** **5**

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"Don't kiss me, you'll blow my cover"

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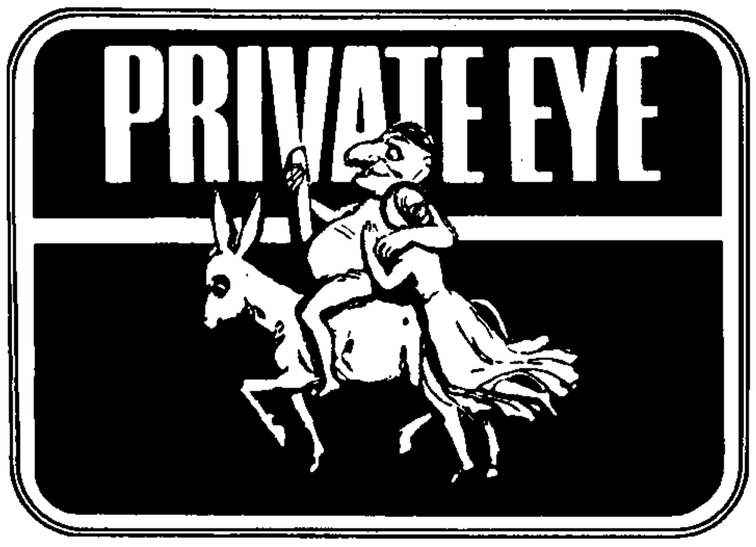

GENERAL Sir Richard Dannatt pronounced himself "very disappointed" at the leaking of details of Harry's posting to Afghanistan; and the prince himself agreed on his return to Britain, saying "angry would be the wrong word to use, but I am slightly disappointed".

He described the colleagues he left behind in Helmand as "gutted", which they presumably are – not least the ones who were hawking cameraphone footage of him in Afghanistan just after Christmas, presumably having come to the realisation that seems to elude much of the British press that the Taliban already tend to treat them as "bullet magnets" whether or not they have a royal among their number.

Despite the success of such "gentlemen's agreements" in the past, Dannatt would not convincingly be able to claim surprise, given the amount of material he had allowed the co-operative press to have cued up and ready for release five weeks ahead of the prince's planned return. PA's chief reporter John Bingham had already conducted extensive "pool" interviews with Harry in Helmand and the agency had 11,548 words, plus video and photo packages ready to go within one hour of his deployment being confirmed by the MoD. Sky News had also had an "embed" with Harry and was sitting on tapes.

The original plan had been for material to be released following Harry's return in three "tranches" over the course of a weekend, to allow as many media outlets as possible (dailies, Sundays, etc) access to new material. Lobbying from ITN had resulted in this being pushed back to a Thursday to guarantee it a splash for its resurrected (and ailing) *News at Ten* on ITV, which does not run on a Friday.

By an astonishing coincidence, Matt Drudge posted his scoop – "they're calling him 'Harry the Hero'!" at 4.37 on a Thursday afternoon – and, as it happens, on a Thursday when ITN just happened to have a full crew and anchor Mark Austin in Kabul.

Naturally the broadcaster claims Austin's presence, and subsequent helming of an hour-long *News At Ten* on the topic, was simply "exceptional good luck", the team having been in the country for a week of special coverage under the banner "frontline live", and denies any link to the leak to Drudge. And indeed, the wording of Drudge's report – "CNN has debated internally on the merits of reporting Harry at war" – suggests a source on his side of the Atlantic.

CNN International chief Tony Maddox denies sanctioning any leak – "it was absolutely not in CNN's interest" he told the Canadian Press agency – and points out that his organization had only joined in with the British vow of secrecy "about a week before Harry's deployment when it was told about it by a British affiliate." And who is CNN's British affiliate? ITN.

WHAT was it Gordon Brown said about restoring trust and exposing the government to the full glare of freedom of information laws, which "is the right course because government belongs to the people?"

His first step when nationalising Northern Rock (or using the "temporary public ownership solution" as he called it) was to exclude the bank from freedom of information laws, making it the only taxpayer-owned company to operate behind an official veil of secrecy. This was essential, insisted Gordon, because "it is surely a matter of commercial confidentiality that Northern Rock should be able to plan its business future", ignoring existing let-outs from FoI rules for commercial information which are good enough for bodies like the Post Office and certainly cover business plans.

To keep any of the Rock deal's grubby little secrets out of the public eye an alternative truth has been fashioned. Under emergency legislation the bank "shall be deemed not to be a publicly-owned company" and so outside freedom of information laws. Perhaps later legislation will deem the whole horrible episode never to have happened, so there'll be nothing to find out about it anyway...

The people's prints

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■ **The MP bugging scandal; DNA database; Deepcut; Lockerbie, Actis & more: In the Back** 28, 29

SOLUTIONS

"...a temporary public ownership solution" – *Nationalisation of Northern Rock, as described by Gordon Brown, 18 February*

"...We have got to get America back in the solutions business."
– speech by Hillary Clinton, 19 February

NATIONAL GRID's £42m fine for having "abused its dominance of the domestic gas metering market, restricting competition and harming consumers" came a week after a fawning profile of chairman John Parker in the *Daily Telegraph* which promised to reveal "what makes this multi-tasker tick".

And what a multi-tasker. Sir John is also vice chairman of Dubai ports company DP World and a joint chairman of South African company Mondi, cruise company Carnival and defence firm EADS. And that's without positions on advisory boards at the Defence Academy and Citigroup, a seat on the government's Asia task force, the chairmanship of the Court of the Bank of England and the chancellorship of Southampton University.

The extent of Sir John's portfolio goes well beyond what corporate governance rules recommend for the chairman of a major public company, but the prime minister for one doesn't care. Parker is also on Gordon Brown's "Business Council for Britain".

Amid this frenzied multi-tasking, the chairman who should have been keeping the company on the straight and narrow – especially ensuring it didn't exploit its monopoly – failed to do so. Funnily enough Sir John told his *Torygraph* interrogator: "The day I thought I was neglecting any of my roles, I would be off." Cheerio soon, then?

Good Lord!

"From all current fears and suspicions arising from our past. **Good Lord, deliver us.**

"From over-inquisitiveness, false sensationalism and prurient curiosity. **Good Lord, deliver us.**

"From all ill-founded conclusions, irrational vengefulness and misplaced accusations. **Good Lord, deliver us.**" – *Litany recited by the Revd Canon Dr Peter Williams at last week's special "service of prayer for God's help in this community of Jersey at a time of need".*

Street Of Shame

"THE *Daily Mirror* has known for some time that the Prince was in Afghanistan," a *Mirror* editorial boasted last Friday. "But we agreed to maintain a news blackout in the interests of Harry's safety and the security of his comrades."

Alas, no one bothered to tell the paper's 3AM Girls. "Prince Harry kept the audience in stitches wincing at the contortionists at the *Afrika! Afrika!* premiere at London's 02 Arena," they reported on 23 January. "A guest said: 'Harry screamed whenever the snake woman pulled her head down to her feet. Bob Geldof and Kate Middleton kept looking around to see him squirming, his face was a picture'."

As, indeed, were the faces of the 3AM girls last week.

"BANISH THE BAGS," shrieked the front page of the *Daily Mail* on 27 February, announcing a "major campaign to rid Britain of one of the most unnecessary pollutants of the modern world".

"Plastic bags scar our streets and countryside and foul our seas," readers were informed over no fewer than ten pages. "The *Mail* calls for a national debate on how Government, local authorities, supermarkets and consumers can dramatically reduce plastic bag use in this country."

Well, one way editor Paul Dacre could make a difference would be to have a word with his underling Peter Wright, editor of the *Mail on Sunday*, who announced in November that "when the history of newspapers is written, it may well be that the greatest innovation of our generation is the humble polybag", into which he and his staff bundle free CDs, DVDs, catalogues and other disposable junk every weekend.

REBEKAH WADE was fuming after hearing on the radio a story about a daring SBS ambush on a Taliban warlord, lifted from an exclusive in one of the morning's newspapers.

"Why the f*** didn't we have this?" raged Wade – referred to affectionately around the office as the "ginger witch" – in emails to the newsdesk and defence editor Tom Newton Dunn. The email continued: "And where the f*** did it appear?"

Er, that'll be on page 27 of the *Sun*, under the headline "Exclusive by Tom Newton Dunn". If only Rebekah could bear to read her own newspaper...

NUMBER CRUNCHING

2 Articles in British national press on US Defence Intelligence Agency report that Taliban have retaken 10 percent of Afghanistan and government controls only 30 percent, news of which was released on 28 February

0 Articles in British national press on US state department report that opium poppy production in Afghanistan is at record high, news of which was released on 29 February

250 Articles in British national press on Prince Harry's deployment in Afghanistan, news of which was released on 28 February

IN A departure from its usual zero-tolerance attitude to lawbreakers, the *Sun* went surprisingly soft on the anti-airline protesters who climbed on the roof of the Houses of Parliament last week.

"Expanding Heathrow may benefit the economy – but at what price to the environment?" its editorial wondered. "Greener options, like a new airport on the Thames Estuary marshes, must be worth a look."

The explanation for this touchy-feely response from Rebekah Wade is not hard to find. Her new master, James Murdoch, is mad keen on environmental issues, and she hopes her eco-witterings will persuade him to overlook her achievement in taking the Currant Bun to its lowest circulation in a generation.

AFTER a promising start last year, recent months have seen a regrettable decline in the number of *Sun* articles plugging the business interests of Rebekah Wade's paramour Charlie Brooks, the former racehorse trainer. Happily, the wily old rogue has found another source of free advertising.

In his sports column for the *Telegraph* last Monday, Brooks wrote about the efforts of injured jockey Tony McCoy to be fit in time for Cheltenham. "His response to the variety of massages on offer to him at Champneys Health Resort was: 'As long as it hurts, I'll do it.' He also underwent 10 sessions of kriotherapy in five days. A total of 30 minutes at an air temperature of minus 135C. There is nothing that this guy won't do to fight his way back to fitness..."

Though he omitted to mention it, the kriotherapy centre at Champneys Health Resort is run by Charlie Brooks.

FEW newspapers have been more outspoken in their calls for a clampdown on binge drinking than the *Sun*, whose "Beat the Yobs" campaign regularly attacks retailers for running loss-making discount offers on beers, particularly those with high alcohol volume.

Lorraine Kelly joined in on 23 February with a *Sun* column about the "plague" of Britain's booze culture. "In some supermarkets," she complained, "it is more expensive to buy bottled water than bottled beer."

Supermarkets such as Morrisons, perhaps, which last week ran an advert promoting strong lagers Becks and Stella at less than 40p a bottle. And in which newspaper did this ad appear? The abstemious *Sun*.

Meanwhile, the *Mirror* took particular delight in exposing the double standards of another retail giant. "Tesco was blasted yesterday for promoting a three-for-two wine offer a day after pledging to help tackle Britain's binge drinking problem. Shoppers at tesco.com received an email with 10 offers, three of which were for cut-price alcohol." And the sales drive didn't end there. A few days later Tesco was pushing a "buy one, get one free" offer on bottles of premium lager with a full-page ad in... the *Mirror*!

CONGRATULATIONS to Nicholas Hellen, the hack who has been behind a series of spectacular *Sunday Times* "scoops".

These have included the research into "gay sheep" that would allow mothers to ensure their unborn children grew up heterosexual (described as a "farrago of misleading data" prior to the inevitable apology); the revelation, three months after the Hutton report, that Greg Dyke was poised to "make a sensational return to the helm of the corporation"; the "pivotal role" to be played by Prince Michael of Kent in a 2006 film alongside Angelina Jolie and Bruce Willis; and the outing of sex blogger Abby Lee, achieved by blackmailing her with threats to print unflattering photographs and reveal details of her mother's career.

Hellen is poised to move up to the post of news editor from the deputy's chair he has been keeping warm since 2006.

"The standard of some Tories is appalling – they're fat, lazy, drunk and promiscuous"

RICHARD "Dirty" Desmond called in at the Oscars in LA on his way back from hawking *OK!* magazine around Australia, bringing along his top snapper to record the great man rubbing shoulders with Hollywood's finest.

But pressing the flesh with Elton John and other celebrities was not a pleasure he wished to share with his senior sidekick Martin "Rottweiler" Ellice – who was told to get back to head office in London and deal with the small matter of his titles being sued by the McCann family for all the rubbish stories they have carried since Madeleine's disappearance in May last year, many of which suggested – without any justification -- that the parents might have killed their own child.

Although Dirty Des's lawyers offered £250,000 in an attempt to settle quickly, the McCanns declined and insisted on £1m per newspaper – a total of £4m, covering the daily and Sunday versions of the *Express* and *Star*. Outside legal experts consulted by Desmond have reported back to him: "You're fucked."

That should, of course, be "Carter-Fucked" – for Kate and Gerry McCann have indeed turned to Britain's most aggressive libel lawyers in their attempt to stem the flow of nonsense written about them.

A SPECTACULAR row broke out between *Daily Express* editor Peter "Mentally" Hill and the *Independent on Sunday* after the latter ran a diary story claiming Hill was so fed up with proprietor Richard Desmond that he was going to resign as editor in April. Hill retaliated immediately by running a story in the next day's *Express*, suggesting newly appointed *Sindy* editor John Mullin was about to resign.

Leaving aside the question of whether there might have been a scintilla of truth in the original story about Hill, the *Express* editor was particularly angry because he felt a long-running truce between Desmond and *Indy* proprietor "Sir" Tony O'Reilly had been broken. Cue a series of furious communications between Hill, *Indy* editor-in-chief Simon Kelner and O'Reilly.

Relations were eventually patched up with the *Sindy* agreeing to publish a correction, but Hill is still hopping mad. *Express* deputy Hugh Whittow has been ordered to drop everything and try to find the source of the *Sindy* story. Good to see that although Hill has lost thousands of readers, he hasn't lost his sense of proportion.

NUMBER CRUNCHING

2 Days it took MoD to get Prince Harry back from frontline in Afghanistan after his cover was blown

25 Days it took MoD to get basic equipment to frontline in Afghanistan, as a result of which Captain James Philippson was unlawfully killed

"SOCCER STAR COLE IS WIFE BEATER," screamed the *Daily Star* last Tuesday. After weeks of Ashley and Cheryl Cole's marital shenanigans, this is just the kind of front-page story *Star* readers lap up.

However, the "soccer star" was not Ashley but former Manchester United striker Andy – a fact mentioned only inside the paper.

Conning the readers in this way is now official *Daily Star* policy, it seems. The Cole story came a few days after this splash in the *Star* Sunday edition: "DEL BOY IS DEAD." Once again, it wasn't quite what the headline suggested: "Writer John Sullivan says he is finally 'laying Del Boy to rest' after more than 20 'cushty' years with the comedy..." As Del Boy himself would doubtless say to any gullible punter who bought the paper thinking that David Jason had popped his clogs: you plonker!

FURY at Tesco's HQ last week as the company came under heavy bombardment from the *Grauniad*, which published the results of a six-month investigation into its huge tax-avoidance schemes. A thunderous editorial accused the supermarket giant of "bilking the public purse".

All of which should make for some lively discussion at the next Tesco board meeting – and some embarrassment for one of the non-executive directors, Carolyn McCall. When not moonlighting at Tesco, McCall is chief executive of, er, the Guardian Media Group.

"AN AWARD for bravery in the face of what could be insuperable odds must go to Martin Bright, the political editor of the *New Statesman*, who yesterday tore into the signatories of a pro-Ken Livingstone letter printed on our pages on Monday," reported the *Guardian*'s Hugh Muir last week. "Repeating his widely publicised criticisms of Livingstone, he blogged that signatories such as Helena Kennedy should be ashamed of themselves... No matter that Geoffrey Robinson MP, the *New Statesman*'s owner, also signed the letter."

Another brave refusal to yield to compromise? Hugh Muir was paid an undisclosed amount by Ken Livingstone last year to help produce *The Search For Common Ground*, the widely-reported study which the London mayor claimed demonstrated that "in one typical week in 2006, over 90% of the articles that referred to Islam and Muslims were negative" – despite the fact that the "typical week" in question was that in which the official report on the 7/7 terrorist attacks was released and a group of Afghan hijackers were granted asylum by the High Court.

Muir has not thought fit to mention this fact in any of the other eight stories he has written for the *Guardian* on the topic of Livingstone since the report was published in November – including his admirable front page scoop of 26 January:"Boris Johnson faces conflict of interest charge over office".

THE feuding between the *Grauniad* and *Observer* goes on, with the former believing that it has higher moral values than its sister paper.

Grauniad sports writer Richard Williams certainly suggested as much when he berated Olympic cyclist Victoria Pendleton for being photographed naked on her bike for the front cover of the latest *Absurder Sport Monthly*. She should have no need to broaden her appeal by "playing the glamour card", Williams tut-tutted.

Alas, his wise words had not filtered down to his own paper's promotions department, which merrily played the glamour card, splashing a large colour advert for the *Observer Sport Monthly* complete with naked female cyclist across page two of its own sports section.

"I live at the top of the street – can your son turn down his iPod?"

AFTER he took over as editor of the *Sunday Telegraph*, Ian MacGregor was called into the managing editor's office to be asked which company car – complete with chauffeur – he would like.

"I'll take neither!" announced MacGregor, aka the Milky Bar Kid, before explaining that he'd like the money that would have been spent on a car and chauffeur to pay for two reporters for the woefully understaffed newsroom.

A noble gesture – but alas! Many months on, there's no sign of the new hacks and the Milky Bar Kid is still cycling to work...

READERS of the *Independent on Sunday* business section, if such people exist, may have been bemused to find a long, admiring interview with Ben Warner taking pride of place on 17 February.

With his brother Hugo, Ben runs a small private sandwich chain called Benugos (geddit?). Since it has no intention of seeking a stock-market flotation, or selling out, or doing anything of much interest to City types, why give it so much space?

Perhaps a clue can be found in Ben's and Hugo's surname. It is a name they share with the *Indie*'s business editor (who also has overall responsibility for the *Sindie* business section) Jeremy Warner – or, as Ben and Hugo call him, big brother.

THE NEOPHILIACS

"Is the back the new cleavage?" – *Daily Mail.*

"Hip-bones are the new cleavage." – *Daily Express.*

"Shoulders are this season's new cleavage." – *Sunday Mirror.*

"Are clavicles the new cleavage?" – *Guardian.*

"The upper back – the new cleavage." – *Guardian.*

"All the fashion editors are raving about Radical Knickerage, and hailing the tender crease where the buttock joins the upper thigh as the New Cleavage." – *Times.*

"Shoulder blades – officially the new cleavage." – *Guardian.*

"Is the scrotum the new cleavage?" – *New York Observer.*

A YEAR AGO the *Daily Telegraph* appointed Mark Palmer as its restaurant critic. His arrival was celebrated with a great fanfare on the front of the Weekend section – complete with photos, so every restaurant could spot him coming.

Soon, however, disgruntled readers began complaining to the *Telegraph* that he seemed to know nothing about food. Not true: he comes from the Huntley & Palmer dynasty, so can at least tell the difference between a shortbread finger and a custard cream. But the grumbles have been heeded: last week the *Telegraph* ordered Palmer to walk the plank.

His successor will be the World's Worst Columnist, fogeyish hooray Jasper Gerard. When his mentor Roger Alton "resigned" as editor of the *Observer* late last year, Gerard realised (correctly) that his pisspoor column in the paper wouldn't survive a change of regime, and so began buttering up various *Telegraph* wallahs and lobbying for Palmer's job. The fact that Gerard is just as bad as Palmer didn't seem to occur to any of them.

But weep not for "Biscuits" Palmer. He is widely expected to start a restaurant column shortly for *Reader's Digest* under the brilliant new editorial regime led by Sarah Sands, his sister-in-law.

"Have you ever considered your carbomb footprint?"

DUMMY MUMMY

LOWRI TURNER, self-styled expert on parenting, has been at it again with a *Daily Mail* feature two weeks ago headlined: "So older women shouldn't get pregnant? What rot, says Lowri Turner, who had a baby at 42. Age makes us better mums."

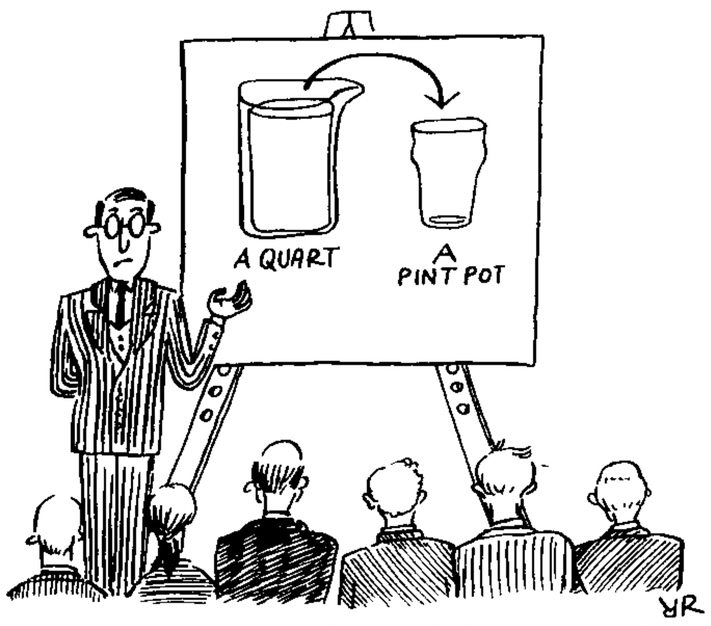
The two ex-spouses with whom she has had children might beg to differ. Husband number one, former *Sunday Mirror* editor Paul Connew, gave up his Fleet Street career to look after their first child so Lowri could pursue her media ambitions – only to be dumped a month before the birth of their second son. Husband number two, computer expert Nicol Batra, got the heave-ho last year, shortly before the birth of their daughter.

Supermum Lowri then confirmed her parental skills with a long *Guardian* feature whingeing that her new baby was "non white" (Batra is Indian.) She found herself examining the infant "for signs that her skin is becoming a deeper shade of brown and being perturbed if I find them... Part of the grief I am going through with my daughter is the loss of the possibility that she will look like me... I look at my baby and wonder if people will look at her and assume that I am not her mother."

Could any child wish for a more selfless mother? In previous newspaper columns, this Dummy Mummy has confessed to being nearly lynched by customers for leaving one of her children asleep in the back of a car in a supermarket car-park while doing the shopping, and has denounced stay-at-home mums as "intellectually stunted... spaghetti-brained morons" for choosing to look after their children themselves.

"Older women are constantly bashed with facts and figures telling them the error of their ways," she complains in her latest *Mail* piece. "Instead of criticising women in their mid-30s for leaving motherhood so late, perhaps some thought should be given to the peculiar drought of suitable men in their mid-30s that suddenly strikes the moment your biological clock starts ticking. Where do all the potential dads-to-be go? They're dating women in their 20s, of course, because there's less pressure."

There is, of course, another explanation that probably hasn't occurred to her: that men in their 30s sprint for cover the moment they see Lowri coming round the corner.



Current Home Office Workshop For Prison Governors

EAGLE-EYED constituents of MP Ed Davey were baffled by the photo on the front of the *Kingston Informer*, showing their man supporting five local Post Offices threatened with closure along with Lib Dem mayoral candidate Brian Paddick.

But where is that Post Office? It isn't anywhere in Kingston and Surbiton.

Nor is it in Brent, despite cropping up on the website of MP Sarah Teather, pictured with Paddick as she "vowed to lead the fight against Labour's Post Office Closures in Brent".

It isn't in Haringey either, but that didn't stop MP Lynne Featherstone and Cllr Monica Whtye posing in front of it.

In fact, the *Eye* understands, the Lib Dems formed an orderly queue to be snapped at London Bridge Post Office. So much for supporting local services!

PS: Richmond Park MP Susan Kramer also appears to have been urged to pose by a Post Office on the very same day, but at least she managed to find one in her own constituency.

STARTING with the vicar himself, the list of ministers who served in Tony Blair's cabinet and have since moved to the private sector to cash in on their contacts in government is endless – Baroness Amos, David Blunkett, Richard Caborn, Lord Goldsmith, Ian McCartney, Alan Milburn, Patricia Hewitt, etc (see *Eyes* passim).

There is, however, one glaring omission from this roll-call of Blairite acolytes: Charlie Falconer. The former lord chancellor and one-time flatmate of Blair, gave up his post more than six months ago when Gordon Brown sacked him after taking over at Number Ten. A former lawyer, he is not allowed to return to practise at the bar and has instead been hawking himself around company boardrooms as a man of influence. Alas, Charlie's interviewing approach has failed to endear himself to anyone, much to his surprise and frustration, though to no one else's.

Falconer's lack of employment heightens the likelihood of him taking legal action against Gordon Brown, who has declined to pay out the six-figure pension payments which Charlie thought he had secured for himself on being appointed lord chancellor. In October, the PM refused to budge on this issue in a private one-on-one meeting. Watch this space.

NUMBER CRUNCHING

75 MPs who have signed early-day motion "deploring innuendo" about parliamentary allowances by BBC political editor Nick Robinson and demanding he reveal his own expenses

5 MPs who have signed early-day motion calling for "thorough examination" of parliamentary allowance system

CALLED TO ORDURE

NOTHING exposes a new cabinet minister to the cataracts and hurricanoes of political life like a tricky session in the House of Commons.

Yvette Cooper and Andy Burnham, newly arrived as Treasury chief secretary and culture secretary, are written up by friendly hacks as "rising stars". But they both got a loose floorboard smack on the chops when they appeared recently in the Commons chamber.

Cooper, aka Mrs Edward Balls, had the misfortune to be speaking at the end of the debate nationalising Northern Crock – just when it all started to go wrong. The euphemistically named Banking (Special Provisions) Bill was already looking rushed. When MPs realised, at around 10.30pm, that a chunk of the stricken bank had been floated off to a shadowy outfit called Granite, the bill started to smoke alarmingly.

Cooper had already admitted to her cluelessness. Keith Vaz mentioned a notorious bank failure from the Tory years when BCCI went down the pan. Cooper: "Details of the BCCI case are beyond my memory." As a Treasury minister (and supposedly such a bright one) should she not have been studying recent banking history before rescuing Northern Rock? Should the BCCI fiasco not be seared into her mind?

Then MPs started to ask about Granite. It was late at night, literally the 11th hour, but somehow this vital part of Northern Rock's structure had gone little mentioned. Couldn't be because the government was keen to hide it, surely?

Cooper's interrogators included Philip Dunne (Con, Ludlow), who is that rare thing: an MP who actually knows what he is talking about. Dunne is a City banker and was on hand to help the Lib Dems' equally brainy Vince Cable. They started to make life tricky for bluffer Yvette.

Cooper became petulant and monosyllabic – a resentful, glottal-stopped "that is wot I said earlier" summed up her tone. At around 11pm she fled the Chamber for 20 minutes, possibly to spend a penny, more likely to seek urgent advice from Treasury officials as to what she should say. Emergency! Emergency! Minister sinking fast!

Harvard Business School graduate John Maples (Con, Stratford) started explaining loan-to-ratio values at Granite and securitisation arrangements, making Cable's eyebrows bounce around in alarm like his celebrated dance-hall heels. "We are all getting a rapid education," said a queasy Cable. John McDonnell (Lab, Hayes) spoke of Granite being a "tax avoidance dodge". Gerald Howarth, for the Tories, suggested suspending the House until MPs knew exactly what the taxpayer was buying at Northern Rock.

"We have made the position on Granite clear," squawked Cooper. Everything, she insisted, had been "fully assessed". Not by the Commons it hadn't. Dunne said she had been "as clear as mud". Granite had far better-quality loans than Northern Rock and could siphon off what other good assets remained in Rock. Translation: this multi-billion pound state venture is a rip-off. Cooper's performance did little to counter that troubling view.

Culture secretary Burnham's first big Commons test was equally shaky. He had to confirm that the government was dumping the super-casino in Manchester but would be proceeding with other slightly smaller casinos around the country. His statement was packed with the first person singular – "I do not intend to authorise a regional casino... I have not seen anything to suggest that the will of parliament has changed... I know that my decision will disappoint many in Manchester". Me, me, me.

But everyone knows that "my" decision was in fact taken by Gordon Brown. Burnham has only been at Culture for about five minutes. Why boast and try to take credit for a decision which has pissed off so many Labour MPs in the north west of England? It was not just dishonest but politically inept too.

Those Mancunian MPs, having failed to get their US-style gambling megalith, jumped up and down demanding public subsidies. Burnham limply agreed, spraying round promises of public cash like a gambler on a losing streak. He also tried to play tough guy by saying that casinos would have to give money to the Responsibility in Gambling Trust. This was surely acknowledgement that gambling causes social problems. So why allow this huge expansion in casinos? How can they claim casinos won't wreck lives at the same time as accepting the importance of the charity which helps to treat addicts?

The only Labour MP to show moral outrage was Ken Purchase (Wolverhampton NE) who said it was "the ultimate insult to talk about regeneration on the back of a game of pitch and toss". Burnham looked winded and started to ramble. He was similarly thrown when a Tory, Graham Brady (Altrincham), pointed out that "when the government changed their mind about Northern Rock the private sector preferred bidders were compensated in full for the cost of their bids". Why were public sector bidders for the scrapped casinos not also being compensated?

Burnham: "Local authorities have to live with the consequences of deciding to bid." Real answer: because they're not Beardie Branson.

Cooper, Burnham, "fresh talent"? Shurely shome mishtake.

'Gavel Basher'

100 Years Ago

IN December 1930, Thomas Isaac Mardy Jones, Labour MP for Pontypridd, gave his wife Margaret and their 12-year-old daughter two Commons travel vouchers that had been issued to him for his exclusive use for rail journeys between his constituency and Westminster. They were caught by ticket inspectors, who decided to press criminal charges.

Mr Mardy Jones was forced to resign from parliament, and the following day he and Margaret were fined £2 each and ordered to pay £31 10s in costs at Marylebone court or face prison. The magistrate announced: "It is rather disgraceful to find an MP involved in a case like this... I think it is very disgusting."

It was the end of his parliamentary career.

ANNOUNCING the Conservative scheme to capitalise on the concept of friendship by charging people a minimum of £1 to be their mate – sorry, to "reinvigorate politics by giving people new ways of supporting our party" – David Cameron was clear where his inspiration came from.

"Radiohead are one of my favourite bands," he wrote in the *Times*. "But it's more than their music that I've found inspiring. In October last year, Radiohead released their latest album, In Rainbows, online – but that wasn't the only innovation. They invited their fans to download the album for whatever price they wanted to pay… Like them, we're not specifying how much people need to donate to become a Friend of the Conservatives: you can donate as much or little as you like."

A more convincing inspiration might be another scheme which dates back slightly further: the "Friends of Rotary", part-time participants who are allowed to join in the "fundraising and fellowship" activities of a number of Rotary Clubs around the UK without taking up full membership, in return for a "non-obligatory" donation to club funds. But that doesn't sound quite as sexy, does it?

THE latest figures from the Electoral Commision reveal a few new names among Labours donors: Huseyin Ozer, for example, gave £5,000.

Ozer runs the Sofra chain of restaurants and briefly owned Granita, the Islington restaurant where the Blair-Brown negotiations at the heart of New Labour took place. However, his donation is emblematic in other ways: two years ago, staff at his restaurants joined the GMB union, protesting that he was pocketing most of the low-paid workers' tips.

Anyone waiting for Labour to take on greedy energy firms, meanwhile, should also look at the donors list. Labour took £10,000 in "sponsorship" from German-owned EON – the latest firm to hike up prices 15 percent, despite a 63 percent rise in UK profits. Labour also took £6,000 from Scottish Power.

WORKERS' power may be farther off than ever under New Labour, but in the sentimental hearts of Britain's trade union leaders the true flame of socialism burns as brightly as ever. Or perhaps, like MPs and hacks, they just can't say no to a free lie.

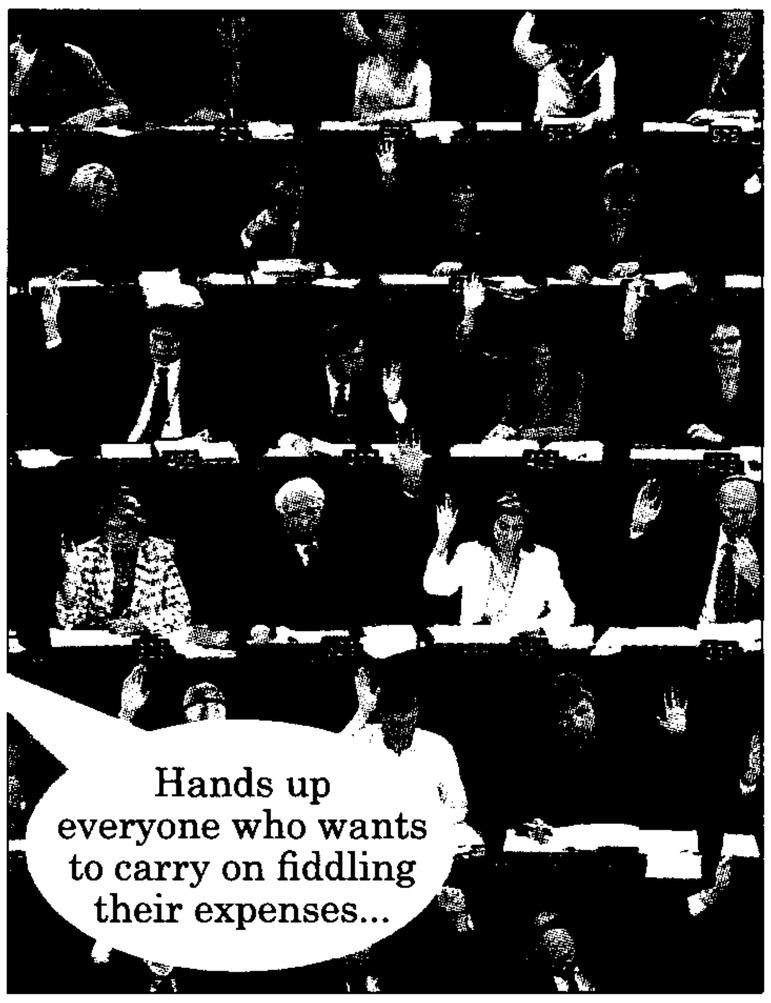
How else to explain the decision of the national executive committee of the Amicus section of the super-union Unite, which voted last month to send itself on an all-expenses-paid trip to Cuba to celebrate May Day this year?

As in previous years the Cuban regime invited a "delegation" to the May Day jollies. But this year Amicus general-secretary Derek Simpson decided the "delegation" would be up to 60-strong, and included every member of the NEC who wanted to go. The motion in favour was passed overwhelmingly, and even now the comrades are stocking up on sun cream and swimming trunks. Perhaps, with Fidel stepping down, they feel Cuba is entering its final days as a people's paradise and it's now or never.

The NEC's trip will cost an estimated £100,000, to be paid for in a spirit of solidarity with the revolution by Amicus's generous members. Treble Corona Libres and Cohibas all round!

'Blackleg'

EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT



BRUSSELS SPROUTS

EUROPEAN parliament president Hans-Gert Poettering seemed to be suffering from amnesia during his first speech on "Dialogue of Cultures or Clash of Civilisations" at the London School of Economics last Wednesday.

Enthused by his recent meeting with the Queen and Tony Blair and the "really serious and intelligent conversations about the EU" he had been having with everybody, Herr Poettering explained "how parliamentary institutions can help promote mutual understanding", using the word "democracy" to prove his point – this despite persistent efforts to silence dissenting MEPs.

"In the last few days in the European parliament, you disciplined MEPs for showing dissent and claimed that dissent is not acceptable," a member of the public, Idris Francis, called out. "That does not seem democratic to me."

When Herr Poettering appeared puzzled with no memory of such an event, Mr Francis explained: "I know several MEPs who were called into your office to be told off for showing dissent – so I know it is true."

Herr Poettering stuck to his guns about "mutual understanding" and "respect" for each other, which was odd for a man who bullied dissenters when they protested against the Charter of Fundamental Rights and recently allowed MEPs to keep their bloated expenses secret.

He had also forgotten about a recent vote by the European parliament against an amendment to respect the results of an Irish referendum on the EU treaty, and seemed unaware of the 3,000 people waving white balloons to protest against the ignored referendum outside the still just about democratic Houses of Parliament a mile away.

"There's a week for everything these days..."

Down on the Farm

ANYONE who thinks Defra does not take seriously the threat of the TB epidemic devastating Britain's dairy herds (official estimated cost to taxpayers by 2014: £2bn) should talk to Gloucestershire farmer Nigel Jackson.

Defra may not be doing much to fight the disease directly; but when Mr Jackson was caught illicitly taking some of his cattle to Cirencester market in breach of Defra's TB restrictions, he was sentenced to nine months in prison.

How admirable, it might be thought, that the law should be enforced so severely. But curious light has now been shed on the way in which the TB laws have been upheld in Cirencester by papers leaked from Defra, relating to an internal inquiry into the conduct of one of its more zealous local vets, Ralph Drouin.

For years Mr Drouin's name has inspired terror across Gloucestershire and Wiltshire, for no Defra employee has been keener to enforce the law against the local farming community. Some years back, for instance, he acted as chief "expert witness" in a celebrated case when a Wiltshire sheep farmer, Lance Beale, was sentenced to three months in prison by district judge Brian Loosley for his cruelty in failing to destroy enough of his sheep after they had been savaged by a mad dog. Mr Beale had hoped to nurse some of them back to health. The case eventually dragged on for six years, costing taxpayers £250,000 and ending in Mr Beale being given a conditional discharge.

Last year, however, Mr Drouin himself became the focus of a secret internal Defra inquiry into various allegations against him, one of them being the way he had allowed Cirencester market to operate in flagrant breach of the TB rules: the same laws under which Mr Jackson had been imprisoned. After a full investigation, the "recommending officer", Tony Edwards, found that Drouin had allowed the market to sell TB-restricted cattle and ordinary non-restricted cattle on the same day, although "the legislation expressly forbids this arrangement". Drouin tried to excuse himself for this and another breach of the TB laws by blaming another official for having approved his actions, but Mr Edwards said that, in light of his experience, it was "entirely reasonable" for her to have accepted his recommendations.

Edwards found Drouin's behaviour "well below the standard of performance expected from an experienced veterinary officer and his attempt to lay the blame elsewhere particularly reprehensible". He was also slated for sending "disrespectful" emails to other members of staff, "some verging on the insolent". The report concluded that Drouin was guilty of "serious misconduct" and showing "disregard for departmental policy and legislative requirements" – in other words, breaking the law, the kind of offence for which a farmer like Mr Jackson could expect no mercy, even a jail sentence.

In Mr Drouin's case, however, after he had been suspended for some months on full pay, he was simply moved from Defra's Gloucester office to its office in Taunton (nearer his home anyway), to "make a fresh start".

'Muckspreader'

NUMBER CRUNCHING

£110m Cost of holding public referendum on Lisbon treaty, which Europe Minister says he can "think of very many better things to spend on"

£1.8bn Cost of employing management consultants by central government each year

ETV

Ski Sunday (BBC2)

WHEN channel controllers are putting together future schedules, long-running series are pushed towards one of three boxes.

There's "decommissioned", which means not coming back at all; "recommissioned", which means coming back as you are; and "repositioned", which is by far the worst. What this means is that the network daren't drop the show because of viewer protests and a fuss in the press, but it doesn't like it any more. So the solution is to produce a completely new series under the old title.

The 2008 vintage of **Ski Sunday** is probably the grimmest example of this strategy. Fondly remembered as a franchise in which David Vine or Hazel Irvine in a big fat anorak introduced footage of people in thinner winter wear and goggles zigzagging down mountains, *SS* has celebrated its 30th birthday season by doubling in length but fifthing in sporting content.

Extending the corporation's obsession with attracting younger viewers, the main mike duties have been given to Ed Leigh, a snowboarder signed from the Extreme Sports Channel.

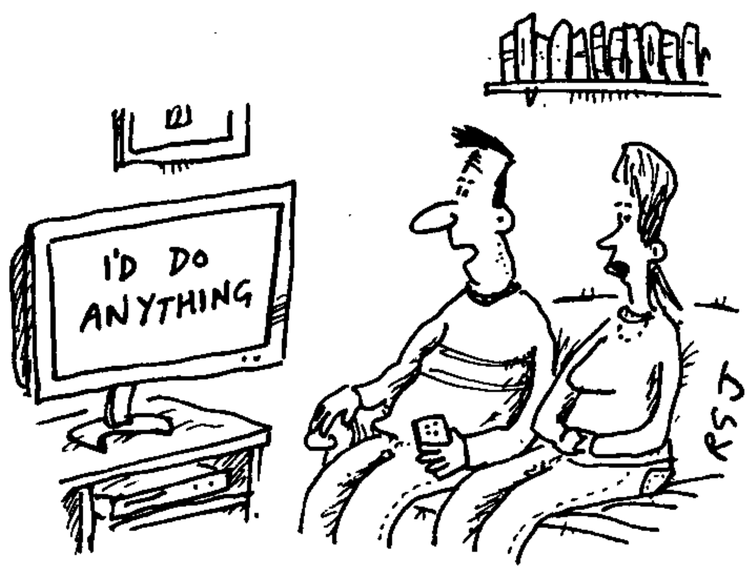
It's 29 minutes into the new hour-long slot before the viewer sees any of what used to be the substance of the show: the highlights from that week's competitive skiing. Before – and, indeed, after – that, the programme turns into that genre of which modern television is so appallingly short: the celebrity talent challenge.

So former hurdler Colin Jackson is parachuted in from the BBC's athletics coverage to have skiing lessons from former Olympic skier Graham Bell before attempting a piste specially designed by Bell. As Jackson does his final snowplough, we're excitedly informed that he's "smashed Fiona Bruce's time by four seconds" – but he shouldn't get complacent because, next week, he's being followed by Tara Palmer-Tomkinson.

Confirming that the series now really wants to be *Strictly Come Skiing*, another huge chunk of airtime consists of Graham challenging Ed to a race across a range of Alps, with one of them going on-piste, the other off. Interestingly, given recent pledges on falsification in television, it's clearly suggested that this race resulted from a semi-drunken bet the night before, even though such a complex piece of filming over several days will have required risk-assessment forms, production recces and logistical arrangements.

But, eventually, the action from the World Cup men's downhill in Norway starts. Although, actually, it doesn't, because Ed introduces a "special look at the doctors and medics who line the course". This package acknowledges the hidden Extreme Sports agenda of the new *Ski Sunday*, which is the hope that blood will stain the snow. The backgrounder on the medical staff, for example, allows replaying of major smash-ups from the past, with commentators gasping: "His fibula is broken and his Achilles tendon torn!" or: "Oh my word, he looks to be unconscious!"

Even when the skiing highlights do finally begin, the show maintains its new desire to be a sort of *Emergency Slope Ten*. The bits we see seem to be the ones in which the skiers nearly ended up in bits: "He's hit the netting hard! He's still moving – let's keep our fingers crossed... He's down! That's a nasty one! Oh, he's moving!"



"It's John Barrowman's new show... and, coincidentally, also his career plan"

Having largely dispensed with the skiing, *Ski Sunday* now decides, in a hugely symbolic moment, to throw out the snow. In a weekly segment called "Graham's Summer Journey", the show transmogrifies into *Holiday 2008*, with Bell going to see what the Alps look like in the summer. In one picturesque Austrian resort, he gets to eat chocolate cheese!

Even here, though, the programme can't forget its orthopaedic obsessions. Gazing up one green slope in the summer sun, Bell recalls fondly: "Todd Brooker had an amazing fall here!" Another stretch of grass draws from him the affectionate memory: "In '81, broke my collarbone there!"

He's better off, then, than *Ski Sunday*, which has had its back broken. Decommissioning would have been kinder than this repositioning. Next season, they should just go the whole way and call it *I'm a Celebrity Holiday Skier – Get Me Up There*!

'Remote Controller'

DUMB BRITAIN

The Weakest Link, BBC2

Anne Robinson: In Russian politics, Vladimir Putin is renowned as an accomplished performer of which activity, Judo or Cluedo?

Contestant: Cluedo.

AR: In 1948 David Ben-Gurion became Prime Minister of which country?

Contestant: Wales.

Talksport

Jon Gaunt: Which film is this quote taken from: "You're gonna need a bigger boat"?

Traffic reporter: Is it Titanic?

DUMB IRELAND

Radio Athlone

Presenter: What sweet has a name that sounds like a day of the week?

Caller *(after long pause)*: Would it be marshmallow?

FIRST DRAFTS

Stephen Poliakoff

MEDIA NEWS

GO TO the BBC's shiny new iPlayer service to watch an episode of BBC 3's yoof-bothering, underperforming flagship and you will be warned that "*Lily Allen and Friends* may be unsuitable for young audiences" and asked to tick a box which confirms "Yes, I am over 16."

Those of mature enough sensibilities who accessed the show broadcast on 19 February could enjoy the following exchange with a viewer:

E-mail on screen: "Hi Lily. My name is Ripley. I've just turned 13 years old. What was the most shocking thing you did when you were 13?"

Allen: "I don't want to answer it... well I got caught giving head to someone at school. I think I was 14 actually... I think there's a big difference between 13 and 14 actually. Obviously you shouldn't be having those kind of relations with people at all until you're at least 16."

FORMER Test captain Alec "the Gaffer" Stewart popped up on the BBC to query the selection of Andrew Strauss for the England team in New Zealand after an extended absence.

"I'm staggered that he [Strauss] has become a better player sitting on the sofa in December while England battled it out in Sri Lanka,' said Stewart.

Actually, as Stewart well knows, Strass has been out playing in New Zealand since January. Of course the Gaffer's indignation had nothing to do with the fact that the batsman to whom Strauss has been preferred, Owais Shah, is a client of Stewart's management agency Arundel – a fact he did not see fit to mention.

EXECUTIVES at ITV News are reaching for the Prozac as the latest figures for *News at Ten* show a mass defection of viewers to the BBC's version. At 9.59pm, a healthy 6.5m people are watching entertainment on ITV. By 10.01pm, more than half of them have fled.

This is another triumph for ITV News's editor-in-chief David Mannion. His previous successes include hobbling hard-news regional shows such as *London Tonight* by making them more gentle and folksy – effectively turning the clock back 30 years.

Encouraged by the popularity of Irene Hunt, prawn cocktails and all things retro, Mannion then came up with his most nostalgic pitch yet: bring back *News at Ten* and get Trevor McDonald to present it. Instant feelgood: Sir Trev and Julie Etchingham would be Reggie Bosanquet and Anna Ford, Patrick Macnee and Joanna Lumley.

Alas, it's more *Ashes to Ashes* than *Life on Mars*: there's even less chemistry between McDonald and Etchingham than between Philip Glenister and Keeley Hawes.

Insiders give the ill-fated enterprise a year before it goes the way of the Austin Allegro and Hirondelle.

WHEN Michael Grade took Treasury permanent secretary Sir Nicholas Macpherson to the men's final at Wimbledon in 2006, no doubt the pair talked solely about the tennis.

At the time Grade was chairman of the BBC, which was locked in fierce negotiations with the Treasury over the licence fee. And as Treasury rules on its mandarins accepting hospitality declare:

"Special care needs to be taken where you have a high degree of involvement at the time in specific issues concerning those offering the hospitality... Indeed in these circumstances there is a presumption against acceptance; the Prevention of Corruption Acts may be particularly relevant."

Anyone for a blatant lapse of judgement?

● *More Treasury junkets next issue.*

"WELL done to Sky for taking the executive decision not to show a replay of Eduardo's left leg being shattered during their live coverage," wrote John Greechan in the Scottish edition of the *Daily Mail* on 25 February, following the horrific injury to the Arsenal striker two days previously.

"In an age of increasingly intrusive voyeurism, it was a reminder that we don't need to see absolutely everything. If the much-maligned satellite station, often derided for putting crass commercialism ahead of all other considerations, can show sensitivity, why not Lord Reith's BBC? There was no need for *Match of the Day* to show slow-motion footage of a young man having one of his limbs mangled. Yet another example of poor judgement by the Beeb, who continue to enjoy public funding without public accountability."

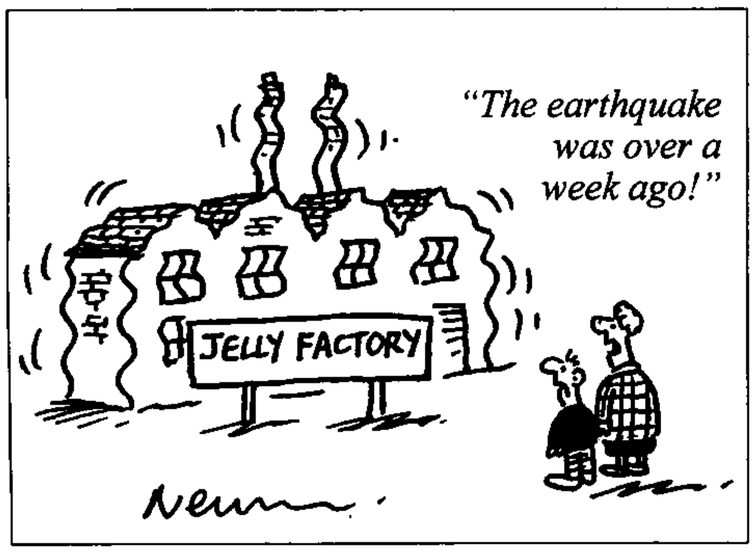
Over on the *Daily Mail* website, meanwhile, a quick search using Eduardo's name gave readers four separate opportunities to enjoy close-ups of the horrific fracture, along with the promise of accompanying "pictures and video: SOME OF FOOTBALL'S MOST HORRIFIC INJURIES".

ENVIRONMENT minister Phil Woolas made much of his green credentials during *Panorama*'s exposé of the bottled water industry on 19 February.

Woolas told *Panorama* that drinking bottled water was "daft" and "morally unacceptable". He took reporter Tom Heap on a tour of Defra's Smith Square HQ, explaining how the department had banned bottled water. Ministers and staff, he said, now all drink Eau de Thames. He urged the public at large to switch to tap water, too.

Panorama filmed a Defra staff member filling a jug of water from a tap. But hang on a minute. That isn't any old tap. It's a Zip Hydrotap, an expensive filtering system which, according to its website, removes "dust, rust and particules [*sic*] that contaminate drinking water". The Zip ("as featured on TV's *Grand Designs*") is a snip at £2,100 per tap, or "only £2,065" if bought online. Defra's spokesperson confirmed that Zips were installed throughout Defra's eight-floor HQ when it was refurbished "two or three years ago… as part of making the building more sustainable".

A Zip spokesman told the *Eye*: "Defra have got them because if you are in London you don't want to drink unfiltered tap water – it's horrible." Cheers!



ARTS NEWS

WHAT on earth were a bunch of sweaty sporting folk doing last month charging one after another, fists punching the air, perilously close to Tate Britain's precious neoclassical sculptures?

Could it be that controversial minimalist Martin Creed has been commissioned to fill the Tate's Duveen galleries in the summer?

Creed won the Turner Prize in 2001 for his "lights going on and off" and is also famous for exhibiting Blu-tack, scrunched up paper and a video of a woman projectile vomiting. But the clincher is that Creed's recent shows in Milan and New York have featured, er, people running one by one through a gallery.

Tate Britain is keeping schtum. But fortunately, by the time he hits the gallery, the gods and busts, including Canova's The Three Graces, saved for the nation 14 years ago for £7.5m, will have been safely moved out of harm's way.

"Holy Y-fronts, we're saved! This must be a job for Pax-man!!"

LUVVIES
AN OSCARS SPECIAL

"There have been so few award shows this season that people must be crying out for the glamour of this ceremony. I don't just mean Hollywood, I really believe that the world is looking forward to this." ***Gil Cates, Oscars organiser***

"My deepest thanks to the academy for whacking me with the handsomest bludgeon in town. I am looking at this gorgeous thing you have given me and I am thinking back to the first devilish whisper of an idea that came to Paul Anderson and it seems to me this sprang like a golden sapling out of his mad, beautiful head." ***Daniel Day Lewis***

"Casey Affleck, the whole journey is a piece of jewellery, jewellery, like every piece on time in order to create a really a spectrum of a ghost." ***Javier Bardem on his fellow nominee for Best Supporting Actor***

"Thank you. We are all standing on the shoulders, we know this, of Daniel Day-Lewis, who isn't here right now, but thank you all so much." ***Vanessa Roth, winner of Best Documentary, Short Subject***

"I'm not comfortable having to be myself or being photographed as myself. Australian Aborigines say that with every photograph that is taken, a piece of your soul goes with it.

And there are some days when I kind of believe that. For the Oscars I was an elegant Edwardian society woman from a painting by John Singer Sargent. It's my way of getting through." ***Keira Knightley***

AD NAUSEAM

THE *Eye*'s old mucker Trevor Beattie, now creative director of agency BMB, cropped up again in the *Grauniad*'s media supplement last week on the nettlesome subject of inspiration in advertising.

"I don't believe in using ads as a source of inspiration to create other ads, as that leads to a form of creative BSE... I prefer to find my inspiration elsewhere: in the voice of Otis Redding, the concept of space tourism and the existence of Angelina Jolie."

A side-effect of Creative BSE must be amnesia, because Beattie forgot that "music videos" are also one of his list of sources. His last ads for French Connection were, as revealed in *Eye* 1153, a direct remake of a pop video, even going so far as to use the same director, locations and actresses.

And as for not finding inspiration in other ads, how about his work for Labour in the last election? "Britain is Working. Don't let the Tories wreck it again" was a Beattie special, which bore an uncanny resemblance to the Tories' "Britain is great again. Don't Let Labour Wreck It" in 1987. Or indeed their 1959 slogan "Life's Better with the Conservatives. Don't Let Labour Ruin It."

THEN again it hasn't been a good fortnight for originality in advertising. Agency AMV BBDO announced that the combined efforts of its creative minds have come up with nothing better than "Work. Rest. Play" as a slogan for a new campaign for Mars. If that sounds familiar, it's because "Work, Rest and Play" was the slogan between 1959 and 1995.

Those who think that repeating a formula but omitting a single conjunction is a rather easy payday for AMV are being woefully simplistic. As Caroline Jary, Mars' brand manager explains: "By shortening the line it conveys a more contemporary message, reflecting the very modern interest in achieving a balanced lifestyle and approaching every aspect of our lives with a positive 'can do' attitude."

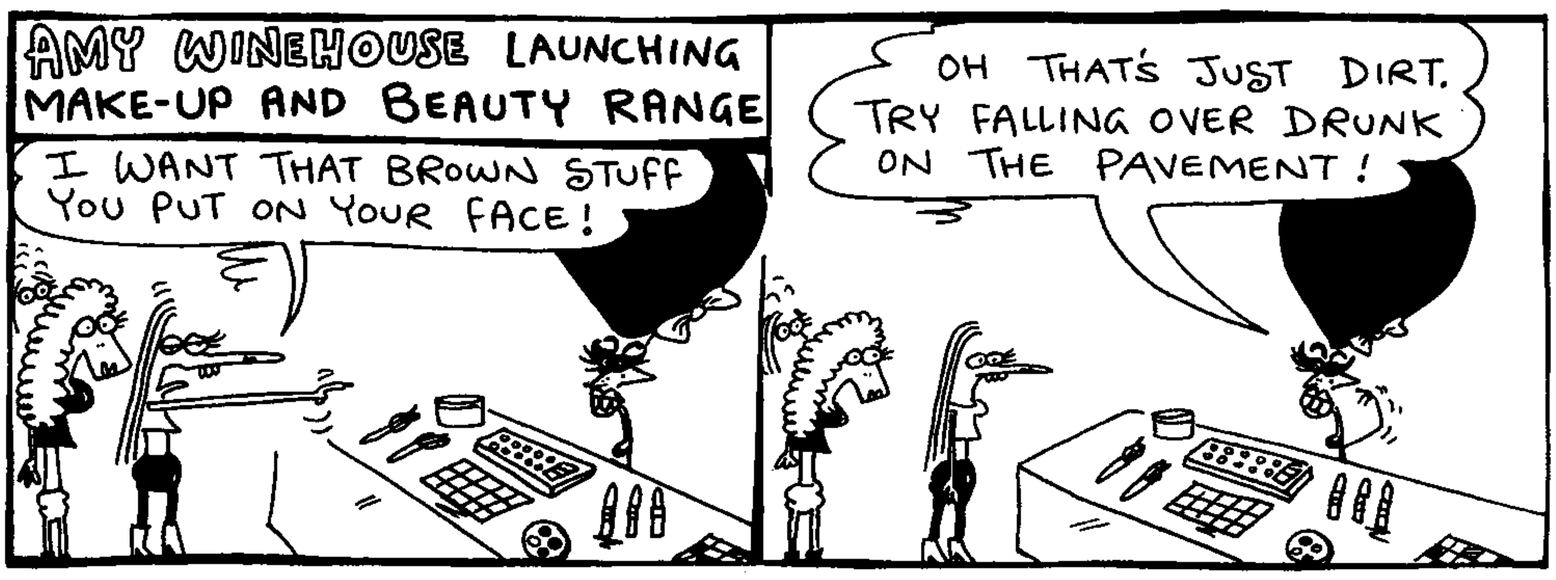
Nor has AMV showered itself in glory with its new work for Doritos crisps. It consisted of a press ad saying: "Make a Great Television Ad And Win £20K", followed by a list of things to avoid and a link to the Doritos website. Or to paraphrase, "Do Our Job for a lot less than we'd charge."

MAKE a note of the day: Tuesday, 4 March 2008. Mark it down as the first sighting of the London 2012 Olympics marketing orgy, a mere four-and-a-half years before the Games begin.

Scottish Widows is the culprit, with a TV slot showing athletes and gymnasts performing to the strapline "Preparation is Everything". Prepare yourself, then, for an unyielding crescendo of 2012 marketing blather over the next 1,605 days and beyond.

SUPERMODELS

KERBER


AMY WINEHOUSE LAUNCHING MAKE-UP AND BEAUTY RANGE
I WANT THAT BROWN STUFF YOU PUT ON YOUR FACE!
OH THAT'S JUST DIRT. TRY FALLING OVER DRUNK ON THE PAVEMENT!

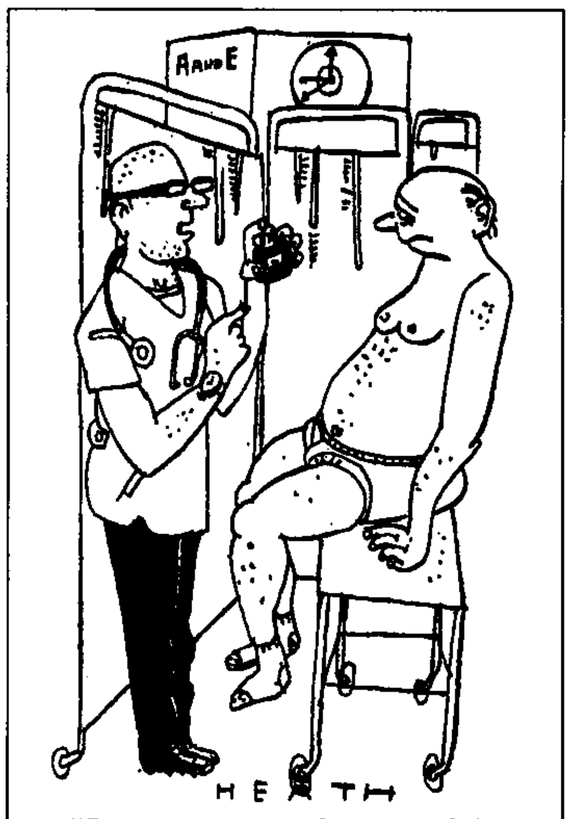
MEDICINE BALLS

Eye Told You So

THE splash in the *Independent*, *Times* and *Guardian* last week that anti-depressants don't work was both old hat and wrong. They do work for mild and moderate depression, but not significantly better than placebo (and with far worse side effects). For severe depression, they work better than placebo.

As M.D. put it in November 2002 (*Eye* 1067): "The perception that many antidepressant medications have trouble out-performing sugar pills has been reinforced by the release of the New Drug Application data sets from the US Food and Drug Administration for six newer drugs (fluoxetine [Prozac], sertraline, paroxetine [Seroxat], venlafaxine, nefazodone and citalopram). These were obtained under US Freedom of Information legislation and include all the trials the drug companies would rather keep hidden in the filing cabinet. When all the trials are added together, antidepressants offer a very modest two-point reduction in Hamilton Rating Scale for Depression (HAM-D) scores compared to placebos. This difference is statistically, but not clinically significant, and has been described by researchers as 'a dirty little secret'."

The new study (of the same data by the same scientist, Irving Kirsch, now relocated from the US to Hull University) reinforces this older evidence. But the real scandal is that, more than 20 years since drug companies started burying disappointing results and severe side effects of SSRI drugs, researchers still have to use freedom of information laws to unearth the relevant trials. Neither the US nor UK government has had the balls to stand up to drug companies and oblige them to publish all their trial results, not just the positive ones. Lobbying from these companies is so powerful they are almost part of government. Without a legal duty to publish, the judgements of licensing bodies like the FDA or the appraisals of NICE are flawed by a lack of access to all the data.



"I want you to take two of these tablets at night until you read in the newspapers they are killing you"

As things stand, its left to drug liability lawyers to turn over stones. Often the data they unearth remains confidential for fear publication may prejudice a trial; but on 18 January, lawyers involved in action against GlaxoSmithkline persuaded the judge in a district court in California to release documents that appeared to show an inappropriate analysis of clinical trial data, thus obscuring the suicide risks associated with paroxetine.

The case hinges on whether the company was right to include suicides, and attempted suicides, from the washout period preceding the trial. This is when subjects stop taking most or all of their other medications to avoid confusion with the trial itself. Adverse events occurring during this time can't be attributable to the trial and so are seldom, if ever, included in the final results. GSK added in the washout data, but only for the placebo wing, thus masking any suicides or attempted suicides attributable to paroxetine. Without the washout data, the suicide risk on paroxetine increases eight fold.

Drug companies want to sell drugs. They will always spin and polish data to maximize sales. The evidence that they cannot be trusted to control the data on their products is overwhelming. Mandatory publication of all trials is the only way to restore trust. Without it, governments, royal colleges, charities, quangoes, licensing bodies, doctors and patients are blinded by big pharma bias. If you're very depressed, try drugs and CBT. If you're just a bit pissed off, suck a Smartie.

M.D.

SIGNAL FAILURES

Kelly's Zeroes

TRANSPORT secretary Ruth Kelly was brazen last week when she attacked First Great Western for the "unacceptable" performance of a franchise – which her own department specified in detail and has managed (or mismanaged) from the wings.

Kelly unveiled "remedial" measures, including extra trains, drivers, guards and technicians, to reduce cancellations. These are the most basic items needed to run a rail business, so why are the deficiencies only being corrected in a deal with government? Because Kelly's department has such tight control.

England is conducting a bizarre experiment where civil servants (who lack the necessary competence) run the rail network. The government is too spineless to admit its failings when things go badly wrong; but so long as it escapes being held accountable, the experiment will continue to wreak havoc.

Labour's incompetence over FGW dates back to 2005, when it combined intercity, London commuter and regional operations into the unwieldy "greater western" franchise – ignoring British Rail's lesson that each should have its specialised management.

The transport department then delayed consultation on the franchise specification until after firms were invited to submit final bids on it. The specification's flaws were unmasked when the franchise was a done deal. Ever since, the franchise has been on the back foot, confronted by groups of angry passengers.

Another mistake was giving the franchise to FirstGroup, a bus company which had coped with the simple Great Eastern franchise (commuter trains to London Liverpool Street) but was out of its depth in more complex situations. First North Western was a shabby outfit; when one Mike Mitchell was managing director in 1998, Manchester's transport authority was so dissatisfied with management explanations for the "atrocious" service, it threatened legal action to recoup subsidy FirstGroup had pocketed for services it wasn't running.

First Great Western struggled with intercity services from Paddington, yet in 2003 was also handed Thames Valley commuter services. Mike Mitchell, then elevated to chief operating officer at FirstGroup, didn't stop FGW achieving fame as Britain's least punctual intercity and commuter franchise (*Eye* 1145).

The government was apparently unaware of these failures when it awarded WorstGroup two of the most complex franchises of all: "greater western" and Thameslink (newly incorporating Great Northern services to Cambridge, etc). Should it have been aware? Yes – because by then the government's director general of rail was one Mike Mitchell.

PS: Kelly's tirade against FGW revealed that the government was handing it a "breach notice" for misreporting cancellations. But still there was no government criticism of FGW for raising regulated fares by twice the maximum legal limit (*Eye* 1204); anyone would think the government approved of companies ripping off passengers...

"OOOPS, we made a mistake," says a poster at Virgin Rail stations apologising for a misprint in fares leaflets. But so far the government has made no apology for a much bigger mistake it made in December 2006 when it agreed to give Virgin massive public cash to continue the west-coast mainline franchise.

Civil servants hedge their bets in franchise deals with a financial "cap and collar". If the franchise brings in more cash than expected, a percentage of the gain is shared with the state. If revenue is lower, the state shares the losses. The theory is that in a franchise's last years, changes in economic circumstances could bring more or less revenue than expected when the franchise deal was signed.

But it turns out that in the first full year of Virgin's new deal Virgin paid the state nearly £7m under "cap and collar", representing a fraction of Virgin's unexpected extra revenue. In other words, mandarins spectacularly underestimated current demand when negotiating with Beardie.

That explains why the new deal more than doubled Virgin's previous subsidy – and why Beardie pocketed £24m last year from Virgin Rail although he only owns a 51 percent stake in it. If the government hasn't a clue what the immediate future holds, how it can it possibly negotiate long-term franchise deals that will hold good for taxpayers and passengers for up to 20 years?

'Dr B Ching'

ECO WORRIER

The Krilling Fields

"SUSTAINABLE finance" is the new banking mantra, with the likes of HSBC and Barclays falling over each other with "green" initiatives to keep environmental campaigners at bay.

One company particularly proud of its record is ABN AMRO. As its website notes: "Our Corporate Values and Business Principles – the key guidelines in our sustainability journey – play an important part in ABN AMRO's banking activities... This illustrates the bank's belief that sustainability criteria must be integrated explicitly and structurally into its decision-making processes."

Indeed, last year ABN AMRO won the *FT*'s "Sustainable Bank of the Year" award. Impressive stuff. But only up to a point.

Several banks have spotted an irresistible investment opportunity in the remote Southern Ocean, as the race hots up to harvest Antarctic krill: small shrimp-like crustaceans that are used in fish feed, dietary supplements and pharmaceutical products. Often called "pink gold", krill can be fed to farmed salmon without the need for colorants to make its flesh pink. They also provide the staple diet for seals, penguins and whales. Snow petrels nesting in Antarctica fly for up to eight hours to feed off their swirling stocks.

The Norwegian company Aker BioMarine has taken an early lead in this pink-gold rush. It operates a high-tech trawler, the *Saga Sea*, in the Southern Ocean, and is on the verge of launching a krill oil dietary supplement. Food giants Nestlé and General Mills are keen to develop krill-based products. So BioMarine's sister company, Aker Yards, is busily converting another vast trawler, the *Atlantic Navigator*, which should be ready to hoover up yet more krill by 2009. It's feared this will open up a global race for krill, with well-known responsible fishing nations like, er, South Korea, Japan and Poland all keen to join in the fun.

Scientists are sounding the alarm that little is known about the history of krill stocks, and that proper research is needed to avert another global fishery collapse. Doubtless all this will be taken into consideration by one of Aker Biomarine's top ten investors – the leading "sustainable" bank ABN AMRO!

ROTTEN BOROUGHS

PLUMB JOB

LABOUR councillors in Lambeth are feeling chipper, having won a high court battle to "recover" £2.6m from Alexander Watson-Jones, a temporary employee in the housing department who allegedly pulled off a massive fraud in 2003-05 (*Eyes passim*).

Watson-Jones "purchased" central heating systems on behalf of the council in batches worth £100,000 apiece. None was ever installed in council properties, because they didn't exist. But Watson-Jones always made sure the money was paid promptly to the "supplier" – a firm he had set up to perpetrate the scam.

But perhaps the councillors should not be too smug. So far Lambeth has managed to retrieve only £600,000 from the sale of assets formerly owned by Watson-Jones. Another £990,000 has come via a payout from the council's insurers. Since £1.3m has been spent pursuing the cash through the courts, that's a net gain of just £290,000 for the borough. Subtract from this the £700,000 pension given to Faith Boardman, the former chief executive who scrapped the council's housing fraud team in 2001 (*Eye* 1023), and on whose watch the fraud took place, and the arithmetic looks even worse.

Meanwhile, the CPS has still not charged Watson-Jones: he remains on police bail and must report to Knacker every month. So, nearly three years after the biggest social housing fraud in Britain was exposed, no criminal proceedings have been brought.

● **HEREFORDSHIRE county council is prosecuting pub landlord Tony Blows for allegedly smoking in his Dog Inn at Ewyas Harold and allowing others to do so in defiance of the ban that came into force last year. Mr Blows denies the charges.**

The case opened before Hereford magistrates last month and was adjourned until 6 March. We cannot comment on the rights and wrongs of the case, but were intrigued by one piece of evidence. With great devotion to duty, the county council's two undercover environmental health officers, the court heard, each consumed five pints of Stella Artois (on expenses, natch) while watching out for anyone taking a crafty drag. With more than half a gallon of "wifebeater" inside them – more than twice the drink-driving limit – how could they tell?

SOCIAL PERK

THE district auditor has been called in to investigate the proposed sale of three-quarters of an acre of land by Sunderland city council that, if it goes ahead, will net the deputy leader, Paul "Stabber" Watson (*see Eye* 1157), around £270,000.

Watson holds the lease of the Ford and Hylton social club, which stands on the site and is run by him and his wife Susan, who is also a Labour councillor. The council wants to sell the site to property developers Gladedale for £370,000, of which £270,000 would go to the Watsons as compensation for surrendering the lease.

The decision to sell was taken by Watson's mates – sorry, cabinet colleagues – although he took no part in discussions. The district auditor may wish to consider whether raising just £100,000 from a prime piece of land that the council has no need to sell is good value for the taxpayer. What's the hurry?

The sale of the social club to Gladedale would be the final piece of a jigsaw of three adjoining pieces of land the developer is keen to buy. The first, a demolished section of the former Pennywell council estate, was bought from Gentoo, formerly the Sunderland Housing Group, last year for £1.93m. This raised eyebrows because SHG, to which the city's 36,500 council properties were transferred for a song in 2001, was set up in order to provide quality social housing for the city (*Eyes passim*). Flogging off former council houses to be replaced by private homes was not part of the plan.

The other aspect of the affair the district auditor may wish to examine is the fact that, as a former member of one of SHG's area boards, Cllr Susan Watson would have had prior knowledge of the sale of the Gentoo land – and hence of the potential value of her husband's social club to developers.

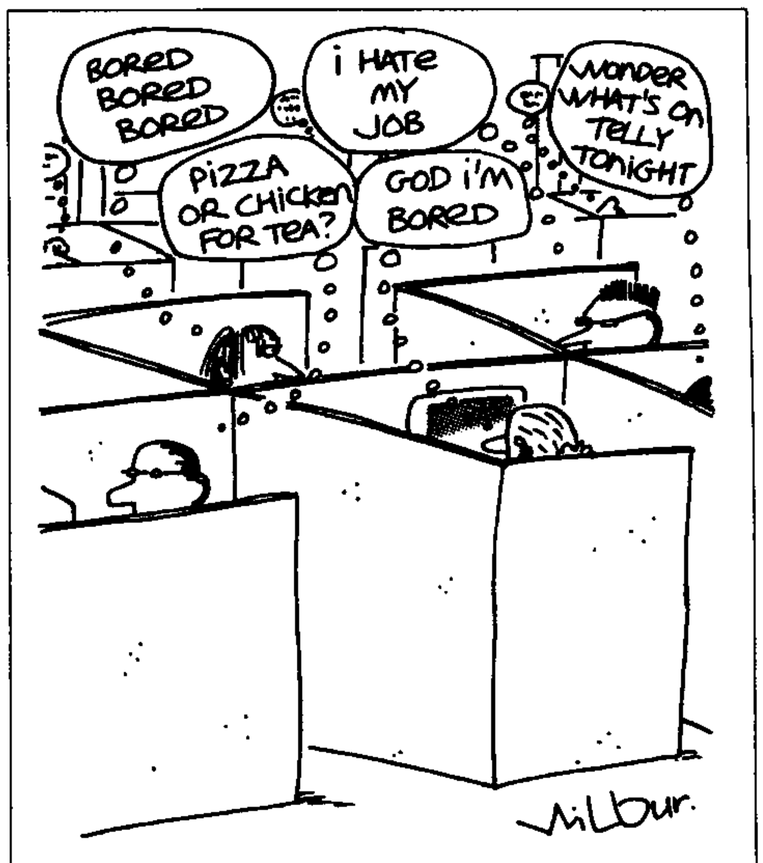
● **THE last Eye's Rotten Boroughs featured a cartoon in which the chairman of a council planning committee says to colleagues: "Excellent! That's passed, then. All we need do now is draft the consultation document." In a splendid case of life imitating art, Tory Bromsgrove council in the West Midlands has invited residents to "have their say" about the redevelopment of the town centre, which includes the demolition of the market hall – a week after the full council rubber-stamped a cabinet decision to go ahead!**

MANCHESTER CITY COUNCIL
Teenage Pregnancy Implementation Manager
Advertisement, Guardian

COMMON CAUSE

COUNCIL taxpayers in Redcar and Cleveland have been left with a £500,000 bill for their Lib Dem council's attempt to defend the indefensible.

The high court ruled in January that the council's grant of planning permission to Persimmon Homes for 359 houses on the town's Coatham Common was "biased" and "predetermined". The plans had been bigged-up by the Lib Dems before the 2006 local elections. Leaflets described the development as "the best thing to happen in Redcar for decades" and promised all sorts of goodies that were never going to be built, such as an "iconic" (aarrgh!) observation tower and visitor centre. When approval was granted, no Section 106 agreement – which would have paid for the extras – was agreed with the developer.



Thinking outside the box

Peeved taxpayers should not only blame councillors. Former chief executive Colin Moore and head of finance Ray Richardson should have been aware that a biased decision taken during the election "purdah" period might well be quashed in court – but they scheduled it anyway. Last year the *Eye* told how Richardson had buried an Audit Commission report into his own financial mismanagement and arranged a cosy pay rise for Moore (*see Eyes* 1198 and 1199). Moore left the council last year, however, and Richardson stepped down last month, so neither is around to face the music.

● **STOP PRESS: It looks like the end for Newham council's notorious Keystone Kops, aka "parks constabulary" (Eyes passim ad nauseam). The east London borough's elected mayor, Sir Robin Wales, has told Labour colleagues that the Keystones are to be disbanded as part of a £26m cuts package – and of course nothing at all to do with the series of embarrassing cock-ups chronicled in the Eye. The Kops are likely to be replaced with regular "police community support officers" more firmly under Metropolitan police control. A sad farewell, then, to Mayor Wales's dream of running his own private police force.**

LEVELLING THE PLAYING FIELDS

AS Sainsbury's launched its Active Kids 2008 voucher scheme to try to "help address declining levels in exercise and growing levels of obesity in children", spare a thought for the youngsters of Saltash in Cornwall.

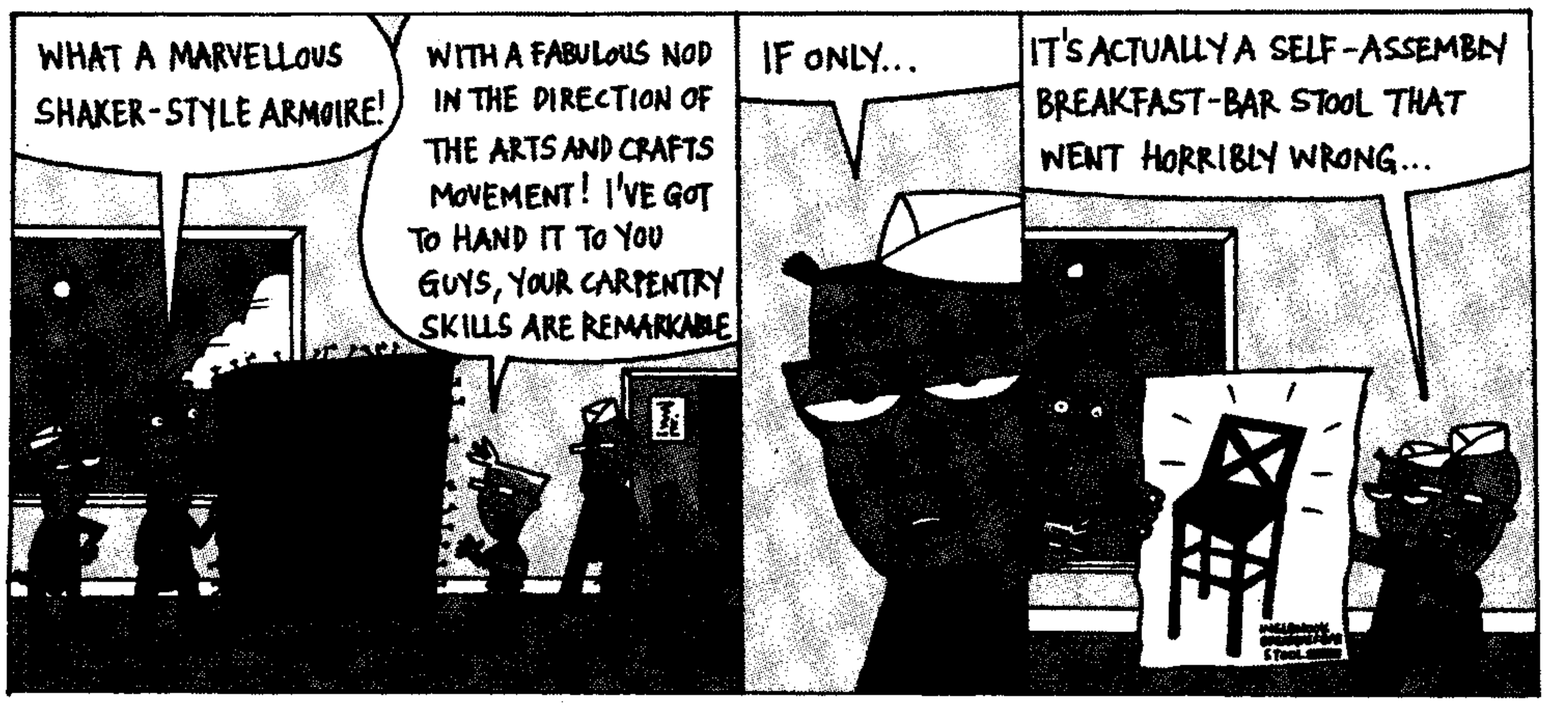
Sainsbury's, which also sponsors Sport Relief, applied for permission to build a 29,000 sq ft supermarket and petrol station on Warfelton playing fields and the neighbouring football stadium. The plan would move Saltash United to a new stadium on a landfill site outside the town, but there is no plan to replace the centrally located playing fields.

The site is currently owned by Caradon district council, which says it will consider the planning application on its merits. The council says it has not yet had a formal approach from Sainsbury's to buy the land but does not rule out selling it, putting out a statement: "If and when such an approach is made, there would be a completely separate asset management process to determine whether selling the site would be in the best interests of the community."

Several hundred people took part in a protest against the plan at the town's guildhall last month. So much for Sainsbury's pledge to "promote healthy living and community values".

IT'S GRIM UP NORTH LONDON

KNIFE & PACKER


WHAT A MARVELLOUS SHAKER-STYLE ARMOIRE!
WITH A FABULOUS NOD IN THE DIRECTION OF THE ARTS AND CRAFTS MOVEMENT! I'VE GOT TO HAND IT TO YOU GUYS, YOUR CARPENTRY SKILLS ARE REMARKABLE
IF ONLY...
IT'S ACTUALLY A SELF-ASSEMBLY BREAKFAST-BAR STOOL THAT WENT HORRIBLY WRONG...

NOOKS and CORNERS

AS politicians wring their hands about the increasing obesity and ill-health of the nation, and huge sums of public money are poured into the black hole of the London Olympic Games, less and less seems to be available to help people (other than would-be medal-winners) to take any exercise. So it is with regret that I highlight another public swimming pool being closed by the local authority whose job it is to run and maintain it.

The Victoria Baths – now known as the Victoria Leisure Centre – is the only such public facility near the centre of Nottingham. It is sited in Sneinton, a growing residential area and also one of the most deprived in the city – scheduled for "regeneration" by Nottingham city council. And the building is rather splendid.

Designed by the borough engineer Arthur Brown and built in 1895-96, a fine clock tower of brick and terracotta proclaims its civic presence. Part of the interior is earlier, built because the Nottingham Enclosure Act of 1845 required that two acres be set aside for baths – a very progressive move. And more pools were added to the rear in 1927-28.

Despite the fact that life expectancy in Sneinton and nearby St Ann's is lower than the national average and that one third of the early deaths in the area is due to cardiovascular disease, the Labour-controlled city council is proposing to close the pools at Easter. The council claims that the "150-year-old building" [*sic*] needs £1.3m of repairs, which it cannot afford, and that it would cost £10m to upgrade the building. Councillors and officers also claim that the facility is "old and shabby". Well, there is nothing wrong with being old; and if it is shabby, that is due to a culpable lack of maintenance by the council.

So what are the long-suffering residents of Sneinton meant to do if they would like a swim? Why, travel by bus to other leisure centres on which the council *is* prepared to spend money. (As I have noted before, Sport England has endorsed the London Pools Campaign proposal that there should be a pool within a quarter of an hour's walk of everyone, each serving a population of 30,000. Surely what is good enough for London should be good enough for Nottingham?)

News of the proposed closure of these much-loved baths has been greeted with outrage and protest, and a demonstration was planned in the old Market Place in front of Nottingham's Council House. Good luck to the protesters: this threat to the Victoria Baths is part of a nationwide pattern of local authority abandonment of swimming pools – about which the government seems entirely unconcerned.

Incidentally, Nottingham city council recently spent no less than £7m on a gratuitous "transformation" of the Market Place with lots of granite and silly water features, all designed by Gustafson Porter, the firm responsible for the inept Diana Princess of Wales Memorial Fountain in Kensington Gardens. Funny how money can always be found for vapid gestures but not for maintaining fine, serviceable Victorian and Edwardian swimming pools.

ANOTHER unlisted building under threat of demolition is the former pumping house at Totnes Station in Devon. It is one of three surviving pumping stations on the South Devon Railway and thus a relic of a celebrated, brilliant fiasco in British railway history – the Atmospheric Railway.

This railway was engineered by the great Isambard Kingdom Brunel, who decided to adopt atmospheric traction. With this, instead of being hauled by dirty, noisy steam locomotives, the trains would be whisked silently along by a vacuum in a continuous tube between the rails. Although the system anticipated the boon of electrification, it didn't work and was abandoned in 1848.

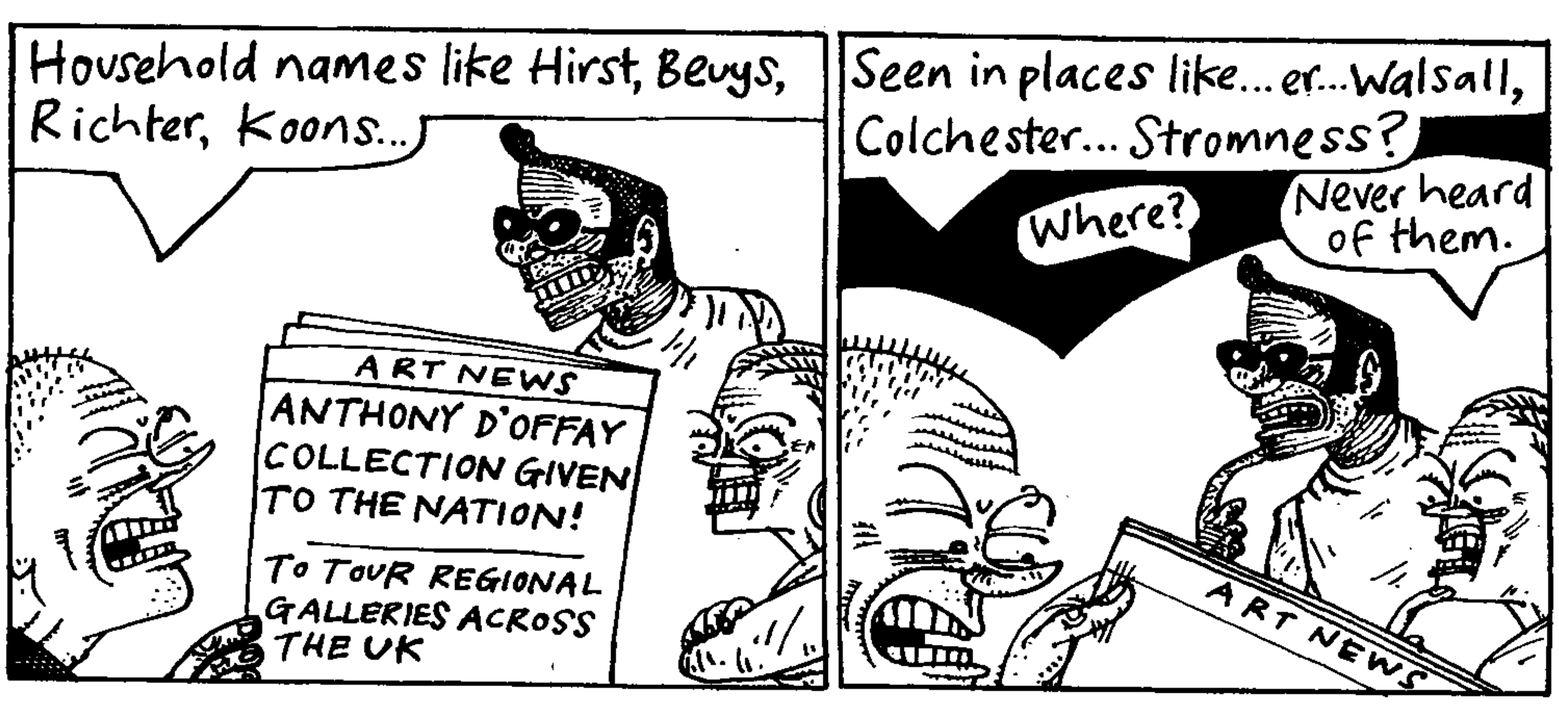
The pumping station, or "engine-house", next to Totnes Station is now owned by Messrs Dairy Crest, a Surrey-based company which resulted from the privatisation of the Milk Marketing Board in 1996. This firm – which produces such revolting fare as* St Ivel Gold Spread *and* Cathedral City *cheese – has now decided to sell the site for redevelopment and, three weeks ago, started to remove the roof – illegally. Local protests stopped this work and a formal application to demolish the structure has now been lodged with South Hams district council. Local groups, together with SAVE Britain's Heritage, is now opposing this, arguing that so remarkable and historic a structure could easily find a new use. The trouble is that although the surviving atmospheric railway pumping stations at Starcross and Torquay are listed buildings, English Heritage had earlier advised against listing Totnes as the Italianate campanile-chimney disappeared long ago.

This seems extraordinary. Not only has Brunel now attained heroic, indeed almost semi-divine status in modern British history, but Totnes marked the limit of atmospheric traction from Exeter before the system collapsed (rats ate the leather sealing flap along the pipe, among other drawbacks). The Atmospheric Railway may have been a costly failure, but it was bold and imaginative and the Totnes engine-house is an important historical monument. Of course it should be listed.

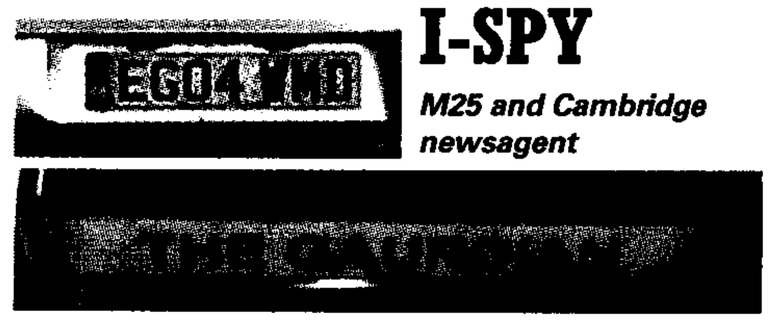
'Piloti'

YOUNG BRITISH ARTISTS

BY BIRCH


Household names like Hirst, Beuys, Richter, Koons...
ART NEWS
ANTHONY D'OFFAY COLLECTION GIVEN TO THE NATION!
TO TOUR REGIONAL GALLERIES ACROSS THE UK
Seen in places like... er... Walsall, Colchester... Stromness?
Where?
Never heard of them.
ART NEWS

I-SPY
M25 and Cambridge newsagent



Submitted by David Miller and Bex Walton. £10 paid for similar submissions. *(SAE required for return of photographs)*

EDUCASHUN

JUST when it looked like Brighton's PFI schools had got a fair deal at last, their new owners are demanding the return of £216,000 paid in compensation for shoddy service.

The appalling state of Varndean School, after contractor Jarvis had supposedly refurbished it, featured in *Eye* 1085. Dorothy Stringer and Patcham High schools also suffered a litany of problems with unfinished maintenance jobs, dirty toilets and unmown grass. So it was a relief when Jarvis was bought out by finance firm SMIF in 2006.

SMIF agreed to pay more than £500,000 in compensation to the schools, and accepted financial penalties for further failures in maintenance work. But now the schools have changed hands again, with the contract taken over by Land Securities Trillium, which wants its money back. After calling in an auditor, the company says too much compensation was paid and it is demanding £216,000 from the schools. Anyone for PFI?

JUST one of the seven new schools built under the government's Building Schools for the Future (BSF) scheme has a sprinkler system, despite the huge costs of school fires every year. And even though new government guidelines "presume" all new schools will have sprinklers, many of the 80 schools being built by contractors this year will not.

Figures published in December show that one school a week is badly damaged by fire – calculated to have cost taxpayers £74m in 2006. Sixty percent of school fires are caused by arson, according to the Department for Children, Schools and Families.

In a written parliamentary answer last month, schools minister Jim Knight said the Bristol Brunel Academy was the only one of seven finished BSF schools to have sprinklers and many of the other BSF schemes were too far along to add them. "For projects that were either in a late stage of design or in construction when the new sprinkler policy was announced, it is difficult to introduce a sprinkler system," he said.

CHURCH NEWS

WINCHESTER cathedral authorities have been accused of a breach of faith for proposing to build on a garden created with the help of public subscriptions in the 1990s.

The Dean Garnier garden in the cathedral close is all very nice, the thinking goes, but it doth not generate any dosh. Hence the need to rip it up and erect a new building to house the cathedral's choir and education centre.

The choir is being turfed out of the cathedral to allow the medieval Winchester Bible to be "more prominently displayed" (ie attract more paying punters). The education centre has to move because the agreeable 18th century building it currently occupies in the close could be let as offices or a home.

The cathedral invited donations in the early 1990s to create the public garden, which commemorates a reforming 19th century dean. Benefactors, not unreasonably, believed it would last longer than 15 years.

'Gargoyle'

Letters

Supreme reader

Sir,

Re: The Power of Gnome.

To quote David Cameron in Prime Minister's Questions on 20th February (Hansard column 344): "Let me remind the Prime Minister, the supreme leader, of what he said..." Seems that you have a devoted reader in the leader of the Opposition!

Pip Pip!
DAVID MORGAN,

Lookalike

Iggy

Heather

Sir,

I know Mr Pop often sets out to offend, but marrying a Beatle? Shurely that's going too far. It can only end in disaster.

KATHERINE DIXON,

Via email.

Parting company

Sir,

I'm ordinarily a great fan of Private Eye, so was disappointed to discover that I was the subject of an article on p8 of this week's magazine (Eye 1204) wrongly implying that a company which just went into administration potentially leaving people out of pocket is "my" company. I am in fact nothing whatsoever to do with the company concerned. I was involved in a company whose assets (including the brand name, which probably led to the confusion) were bought some time ago by the company that you referred to, who then operated the business. I have not even had any executive involvement with the original company since 2006. Once again, I am nothing at all to do with the company your article referred to. Your reporter did not contact me for a comment on this story, so I was not able to point this out.

I'll continue to be an avid reader!
Many thanks and best wishes.

CHRIS PHILP,

Via email.

Lounge Lezard

Sir,

Regarding your story about myself and Katherine Bucknell (Books & Bookmen, Eye 1204) – I wish I could say that I have adopted a policy whereby I now only gave good reviews in exchange for dinner. Sadly, the truth is more mundane: I'd decided to review the book before the invitation came. I could, of course, have chosen to review another one and accepted the dinner, or reviewed the book and declined the invitation. In the end I was overcome by hunger and curiosity, and I liked the book anyway, so thought I would, almost literally, have my cake and eat it. It's the first time I've done this in 20 years of reviewing. It probably won't happen again, but if it does, I'll let you know.

Yours,
NICK LEZARD,

Via email.

Fly in the ointment

Sir,

It is certainly worrying that the Primary Flight Control, PFC, software for the Boeing 777 is not properly verified, as your article in Issue 1204 says. However two things need to be said. Firstly the system architecture is still triplex, even if the software in each computer is identical. Secondly, and more importantly in relation to your article, this has no bearing whatsoever on the BA038 incident. If the engines failed to respond to thrust lever inputs then if any software failed it would be in the engine's FADEC system, which controls the fuel supply to the engine. Each engine has its own FADEC (Full Authority Digital Engine Control) computer, each with multiple control lanes. This would mean that the same fault occurred at the same time in both engines. While this is conceivable, it is more likely that a common fault, such as a problem with the fuel supply, was the root cause. We won't know for sure until the AAIB concludes its investigation.

Whatever the cause was, it is most unlikely to have been due to the less than adequate PFC software. The crew noticed the engines failed to respond to an auto-throttle demand for increased thrust, they then attempted to increase thrust manually, also with no response. PFC software does not control the engine response to thrust lever demands. FADEC, however, does. Your aviation correspondent appears to be barking up the wrong tree, as usual.

KEVIN HALL,

Shoreham-by-Sea.

Out to Lunchtime

Sir,

Why is it that Lunchtime O'Boulez only ever mentions music other than traditional "classical" music in terms of ridicule or contempt? Perhaps he hasn't stopped to think that an Afro-Caribbean operetta (Eye 1204) was selected for the Performing Rights Society shortlist not just to be "standardly right-on" but because it just might be of equal musical value to works by Bizet or Strauss. In fact, perhaps the shortlist's lack of the kind of music he likes in is a symptom of "classical" music itself stagnating and producing little of note.

Come to think of it, why does the column cover only classical music anyway? There is just as much of note (probably much more) happening every week in pop music circles. That funny thing called rock 'n' roll has been going over 50 years now, and I'm told is becoming quite popular among the young folk.

All the best,
MARTIN POLLARD,

Caerphilly.

Photo opportunity

Sir,

I am extremely confused, concerned and upset as I fail to recognize the photo of an elderly gentleman (well, I admit that title just might just require a stretch of the imagination) with Asian babe on page 16 of Eye 1204. Does this mean I've got Alzheimer's?

Yours,
JULIE CHRISTIE (aka E. Schumann)

Paris.

Who's barking now?

Sir,

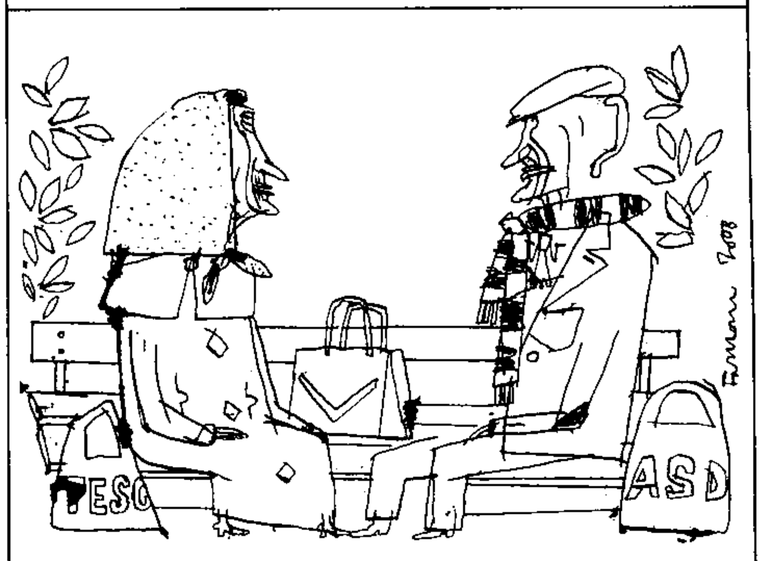
In "Silly Fuggers" (Eye 1204, page 5), you forgot to list the dog which was sitting in the Fiat Uno, next to James Andanson (dixit Mr Fayed).

You can be so 'woofless' at times...

Kind regards,
VALÉRIE DABBS,

Via email.

Scenes You Seldom See



"There's one thing to be said for a National Health hospital – you can't beat the food"

Life on Marrs

Sir,

There are two possible reasons why Jackie Ashley and Andrew Marr don't appear on the list of donors to St Paul's Girls' School. (Eye 1203)

1. They could be one of the many anonymous donors.

... or, more pertinently...

2. Their daughter attends another school and therefore, they don't count as St Paul's parents!

1 out of 10 - must try harder!

Yours aye,
T. ALLEN,

Via email.

Sir,

Your story about Jackie Ashley and Andrew Marr's lack of financial support for the St Paul's Girls' School development trust (Street of Shame, Eye 1203), left a distinctly sour taste in my mouth.

There are many different and many much more effective ways of supporting the 'poor' than enabling some of their offspring to attend an overpriced private school. The fact that Jackie Ashley and Andrew Marr have chosen not to support this particular charity (or have chosen to keep quiet about it) does not mean that they are tight-fisted bastards.

It also rather misses the point of a plea for social justice. Social justice is not about rich people choosing their preferred way of sharing with those less fortunate, whilst making sure that the feckless sinners cannot spend the money on fags or booze (the 'deserving poor', anyone?). Social justice is about the equal distribution of opportunities and benefits throughout society.

Is this some kind of personal vendetta? If so, please spare me the details.

Yours,
ELKE BACHLER,

London W9.

Anagram

Sir,

At first, I thought your "Sleazy Come – Sleazy Go" cover (1203) was grossly unfair. After all, no rules were broken.

However, juggling the letters of "Conway Family Values" gives the anagram: Foul, evil scam, anyway.

Please accept my humble apologies.

Yours,
MICK TULLY,

Northolt.

A pundit writes

Sir,

Would it be fair to say that replacing the University of Southampton dolphin logo (Eye 1204) has served very little porpoise? Especially to the tuna of £160,000?

WILL MELLING,

London.

French letters

Sir,

Your entertaining piece about a man being asked to leave the French Pub prompted us to investigate.

According to one witness, not only was the gentleman swearing and drunk but was doing a very passable impression of Michael Winner. On being asked to leave he was heard to loudly demand, "Do you know who I am?" Are they by chance related?

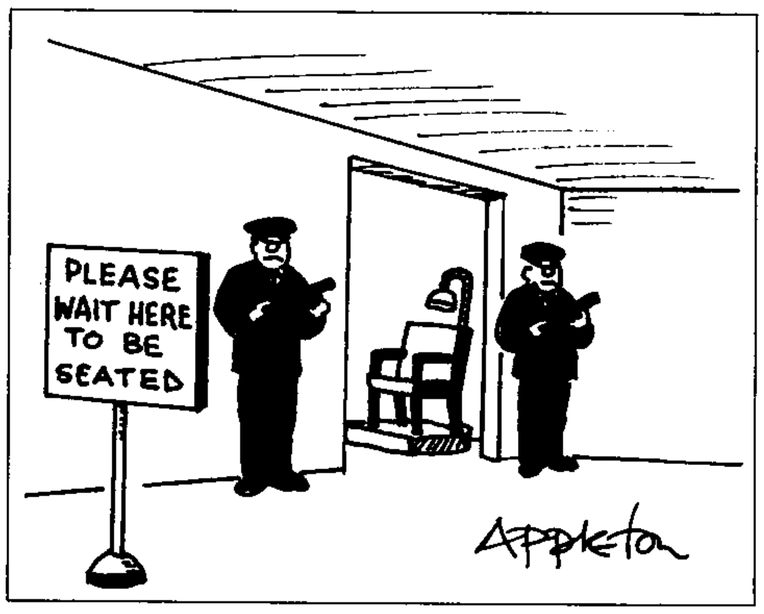
Good to see the old-timers keeping their end up. We will not be cancelling our subscription as we are proud to contribute monies to the tired and emotional "Italian Professor" fund of Soho.

Pip pip!
STEVE PHILLIPS & JANE OWEN,
Highgate, N6.

Sir,

It seems you object (issue 1204, p.7) to the expulsion of a foul-mouthed drunk from the French Pub in Soho. Given the Eye's noble record of castigating the use by journalists of media space to settle scores, and the equally creditable teetotalism of its present and previous editors, should we regard this instance as a momentary lapse from its self-set moral standards?

Yours (briefly sober, sod it),
ROLF NORFOLK,
Via email.



Flat ire

Sir,

A weird story on your media pages suggests that in my book about media falsehood, Flat Earth News, I failed to do basic research on the allegation that the BBC's website asks its journalists to check and write breaking news stories in less than five minutes. The reality is that, after hearing of this ridiculous deadline from several BBC staff, I got hold of the BBC website's own internal guidance, which clearly states the five-minute target. I also obtained a fistful of internal memos which go into considerable detail about how journalists should attain it.

It is true, as you say, that when I spoke to a meeting of BBC journalists, two website executives complained that I had not been to visit them. Since they went on to deny the content of their own memos, I was happy I hadn't wasted my time with them.

NICK DAVIES,
c/o Chatto and Windus, London SW1.

Anti-social work?

Sir,

Despite your magazine's faults (and, God knows, they are many), I have always bought a copy because you seemed to go for difficult targets. (So no subscription to cancel.)

Now you have joined the thundering herd of the smug, conventional press in deciding to rubbish social workers, possibly the easiest target of all. (You actually echo Vicki Woods of the Telegraph, you fearless satirists!!) Your cartoon last week, where the social worker says the baby is in danger "Because we are no good" might well have addressed a serious problem. It should have said the baby is in danger "Because of the dilemma between the law's presumption that the best place for a child is with parents, and complexity of child protection legislation."

Not such a catchy caption, but true. It might have drawn more people into the debate. Things do need to change. We are unlikely to change things for the better by crapping on the people who do all the work. It is like stoning the firemen.

If social workers remove an infant unharmed from a dangerous environment, they are baby snatchers. Give the family the benefit of the doubt for that extra fatal moment, and the social workers suffer the derision of the mob.

Actually, deliberate misunderstanding by the press is easy to shrug off compared to the dreadful horrors faced every day by dedicated and rather modestly paid social workers. It is an emergency service, with all the stress and trauma that entails. Failures do not make them all rubbish.

I will do my best in future to borrow a copy of Private Eye, instead of buying it, but who do I know that reads it? Perhaps I will nip down to the social work team and borrow theirs.

Yours sincerely,
PAUL LYNCH,
London W4.

Colemanballs

£10 paid for contributions

"Both Rafa Benitez and David Moyes have said that they won't be having another number two until the end of the season."
ALAN JACKSON, BBC Radio Merseyside
(Jon West)

"It is a lot harder when you are 4-1 down than when you are 4-1 up."
KEVIN KEEGAN
(Harmesh Raindi)

"I don't have any children, but my mother did..."
JACQUI DANKWORTH, Radio 4
(John Saunders)

"I'll bet there are eight teams in the last sixteen who won't win the competitiuon."
ANDY GRAY, Sky Sports
(John McCready)

"Somehow his legs couldn't keep up with the rest of him..."
JOHN ROEDER, BBC1
(Colin Buttwell)

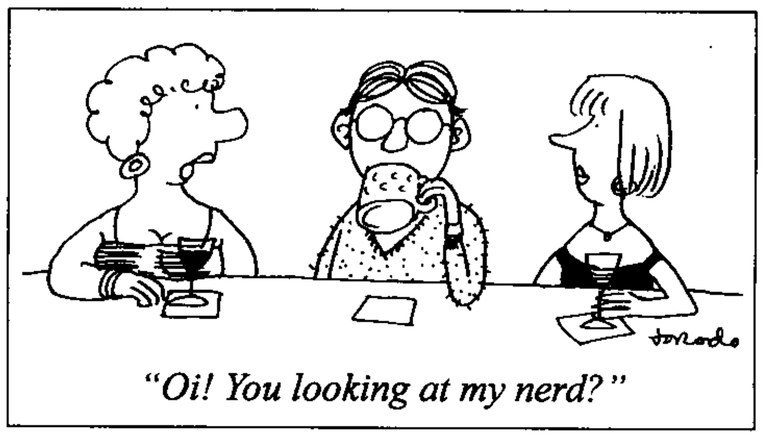
GLOBAL WARMING THE PLUS SIDE
AJP
NOW EVEN MORE IMPRESSIVE!
28. MOUNTAINS WILL GET TALLER WHEN RELEASED FROM THE WEIGHT OF GLACIERS.

Lookalike

Winehouse **Callas**

Sir,

Check the eye make-up!
KATHRYN TURNER,
Via email.



"Oi! You looking at my nerd?"

Ped'ants Corner

... Re the item on mouse restaurants in Vietnam (Funny Old World, Eye 1204) ; I know Agent Orange produced some weird and hideous effects, but really, what size are these mice? If one trapper catches 50 mice per night, and one market stall sells 4 to 5 tons of mice A DAY, just how big are these rodents? Or is this some obscure form of maths problem? Or, of course, should I get out more and stop trying to work out how many mice there are per ton?

FIONA ALLEN.

... Once again basic arithmetic proves the Achilles heel of the classically educated public schoolboys who write for our favourite satyrical [sic] magazine. Brussels Sprouts, issue 1204: 61 ÷ 102 = ? I make it about three fifths, not four. But well done for having a go...

NIGEL SMITH.

... Mr Blunkett's failure to declare his interests in respect of the UK's receding ID cards scheme may be venial. Certainly, he works for Entrust Inc., the excellent supplier of PKI software. But Mr Blunkett remains under the impression that ID cards will be secure thanks to biometrics, nothing to do with Entrust. He's wrong but, in the circumstances, not deceitful. The big question is why Entrust Inc. employ someone who doesn't understand what their software does.

DAVID MOSS.

... While I realise that the advent of the talkies may have passed Lord Strobes by, it is a tad unkind to describe Cuba Gooding Jr as a "minor film star" (Eye 1204, p.7). He did win the Best Supporting Actor Oscar in 1997 for "Jerry Maguire", an accolade yet to be afforded to his co-, and presumably major, film star, Tom Cruise.

On the other hand, his latest nomination is for a Razzie for "Daddy Day Camp" so perhaps you have a point.

ANDREW FURR.

... I feel I should draw attention to what seems to be an error in Graeme Keyes' (Keyes's?), witty cartoon in Eye 1204, in which a customer in a record shop asks which way he should go for 'Northern Soul'. The proprietor's response, "Noooo..not that way. That way lies madness!!!", should, I believe, read, "That way madness lies!!!" – ie King Lear's glum words from the play of the same name, (Act 3, scene 4), to which the cartoon presumably refers.

MARTIN DOYLE.

Letter from **Bangkok**

from Our Own Correspondent

THESE are worrying times for our generals who in 2006 overthrew a government they said was corrupt, divisive and pushing Thailand towards disaster. They wanted, they said, to clean up the system and restore the country to constitutional order. Now Thaksin Shinawatra, the man they toppled, is back from exile and the military's plans are in disarray.

Thaksin faces multiple charges of corruption and abuse of power and says he is here to clear his name. He insists he will stay out of politics but that appears unlikely: the generals already know they are victims of what effectively amounts to a counter-coup.

This became clear after elections late last year. It's not just that Samak Sundarave, our 72-year-old new prime minister, is a crude bully who is notorious for upsetting even his own friends. Nor is it his links to corruption when he served as governor of Bangkok. The generals probably have few problems with his talents as a TV chief, or his dubious past as commander of our even more dubious police force. But they do know Samak was elected mostly because he was Thaksin's nominee.

The military had banned the former prime minister and 100 of his closest supporters from standing for office. They dissolved his Thai Rak Thai party and airbrushed him out of national television and radio.

The military and the middle classes may despise his crude, populist nationalism – but Thaksin has his own supporters, at least among peasant farmers in the north and east, and among the underprivileged in Bangkok. And while Thaksin was gone, they never forgot him. He gave selective interviews to the foreign media – especially CNN – that the regime could not censor; and he bought a Premiership football club, Manchester City. Sports-mad Thais saw him almost weekly, sitting watching his team. It sent a clear message: Thaksin CEO was a force to be reckoned with.

But he is not a force for healing – and nor is his frontman. They share the same kind of extreme politics; though Samak has a grimmer pedigree. In 1976 he masterminded a violent crackdown on student protests at Thammasat University as the vigorously right-wing interior minister of the then military-led government. Hundreds were killed. He also accused Vietnamese refugees of selling noodles that shrank the genitals of Thai men. This was a sensitive topic: several Vietnamese hawkers were killed in the hysteria his broadcasts caused.

Then there is the government. Even Samak has had to admit his team, personally vetted by Thaksin, was an "ugly duckling cabinet", a motley mixture of old Thaksin loyalists, relatives, wives and children of the Thai Rak Thai politicians who have been banned from politics, and old politicians from the smaller political parties in his ruling coalition. None of the ministers now in charge of the economic ministries – the treasury and commerce – have any background in business or economics. Their deputies in almost every case are former policemen or women.

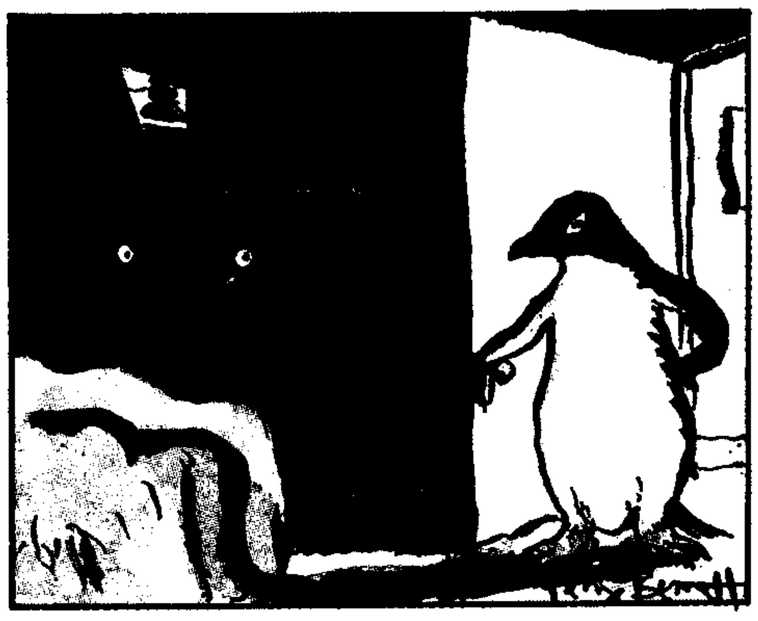
The foreign minister is Thaksin's personal lawyer. As many bureaucrats have lamented, they now have someone in charge who is actually "foreign to the ministry". Most controversially Samak retained the defence portfolio himself. despite military demands that a former military man be appointed.

Tensions now seem set to grow. Thaksin supporters gave him a rapturous welcome in Bangkok on 28 February while his enemies promised mass demonstrations. What has been a process marked largely by bloodless plotting now carries the risk of spiralling out of control. Another military coup cannot be ruled out. Our revered King supported the last coup, even though he may not have ordered it. But will he want to see us return to military rule and face being ostracised by the international community?

FUNNY OLD WORLD

COMPILED BY **VICTOR LEWIS-SMITH**

"People always say that penguins mate for life but that's total bollocks," natural history filmmaker Dr Lloyd Spencer Davis told his audience at Griffith University in Queensland. "In reality, they're just as likely as anyone else to be unfaithful, to have a quick shag, or to shift house and leave the kiddies behind. We like to go all Disneyfied and put monogamous values on them that we ourselves can't live up to, but penguins actually won't tolerate a partner who can't pull their weight, and about 50% of them get divorced. Actually, if you really want to know about changing partners, look at the Adelie penguins in Antarctica, because



they've even developed a form of prostitution.

"What happens is that Adelie penguins need stones for their nests, but in the icy Antarctic stones are at a premium. So you get these poor males on the edge of the colony, and they're usually young, you know, teenagers, and they've collected a whole lot of stones. The female approaches them, and sometimes she just picks up the stone and runs. But often she'll lie down in the nest of stones, and let the male have sex with her. She's exchanging sex for stones.

"Having studied Adelie penguins for years, I definitely like them better than when I started, because I no longer aspire to be like them. In fact, I've realised that they're just like me." *(ABC News, 22/4/04. Spotter: Brendan Joseph O'Byrne)*

"*I've had this electricity meter in my home for a few years now," Shirley Jones told reporters in Cannock, Staffordshire, "and I use one of these N-Power pre-payment top-up cards to put credit on it each week. It worked fine at first, but last week I noticed that I was running low on electric, so I went to my local shop and put £5 on my card. But when I walked home and slotted the card into the meter, nothing happened.*

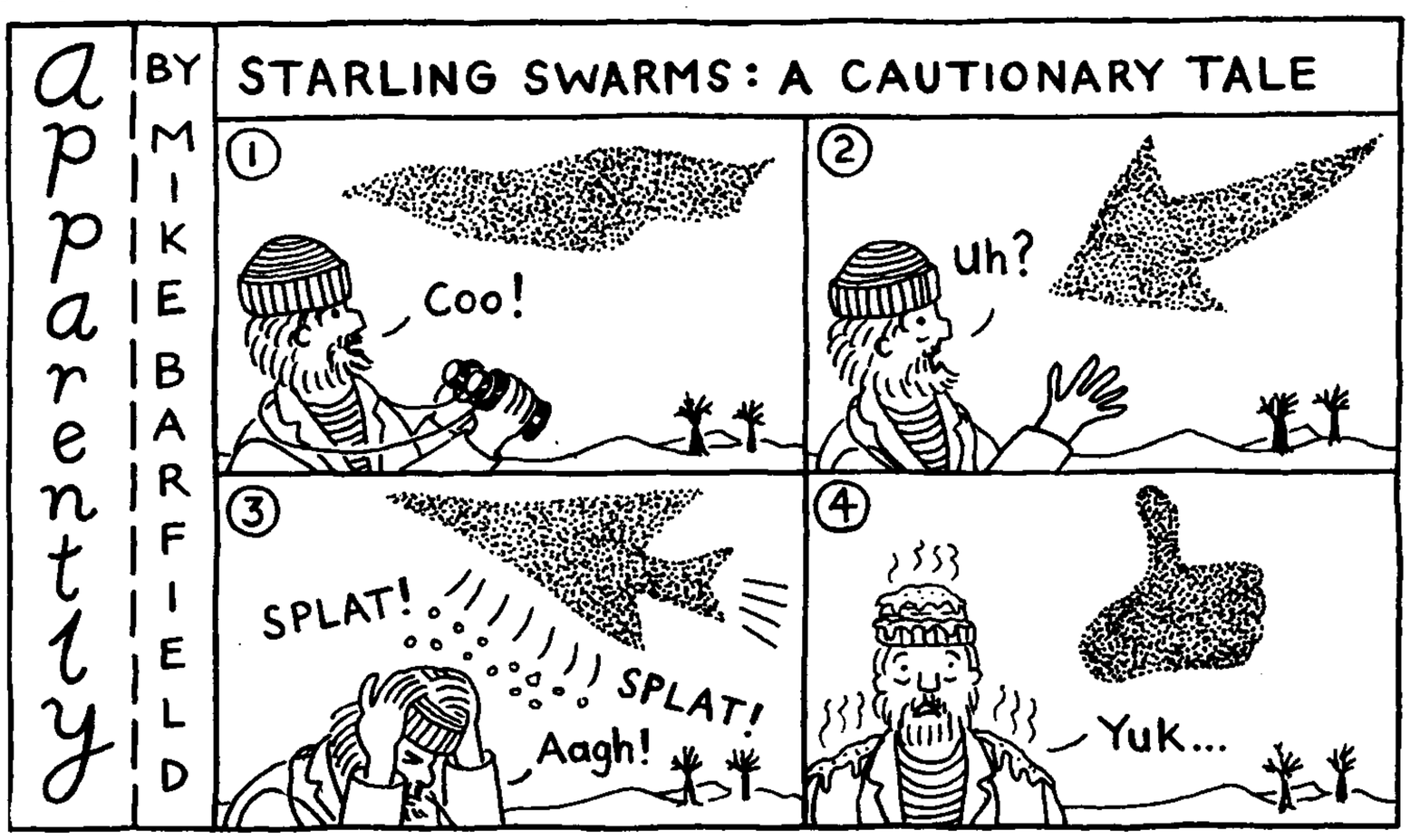
"I thought that was a bit weird, so I went back to the shop and they confirmed that the £5 had definitely been put onto my N-Power card. We went through all the possible causes of my card having been wiped, and eventually the manager discovered the culprit. It was the pelican crossing that I'd walked past on my way back from the shop. Apparently, the electronic bleeps in pelican crossings have the capacity to wipe these top-up cards, simply by you walking past them with the card in your hand or purse. N-Power have assured me that the missing fiver will appear on my account within the next few weeks, but frankly I'm still a bit baffled by it." (The Cannock Post, 12/9/07. Spotter: Ed Ratnam)

– o –

"It may be impossible to prove absolutely that Jamie Thomas Lacey used the vacuum cleaner and the detergent bottle for the purposes of sexual gratification," Judge Tony Rafter told a court in Brisbane, "but I'm quite sure that he didn't break into the property just to hoover the carpets. Consider the facts. The owner of the house in Millmerran returned home to find that her property had been broken into. Nothing was missing, but scattered on the bathroom floor were some bottles of cider, the owner's vacuum cleaner, a collection of pornographic magazines, a Toilet Duck bottle fitted with a wooden stick that tapered at one end, and a sticky latex glove. Her shower screen was also broken. DNA recovered from the latex glove was identified as Lacey's, and when his home was searched, a black bag was discovered, containing condoms, cream, honey, latex gloves, and a wooden stick that tapered at one end. Lacey later admitted that this was his 'masturbation bag'."

Lacey's defence barrister, Shaun Gordon, told the court that "my client accepts the police's version of events, but has only a vague recollection of breaking into the property, because he was high on LSD and amphetamines at the time."

Judge Rafter said Lacey's crime deserved a jail sentence, but instead ordered him to receive counselling as part of a strict 12-month intensive corrections order. *(Northern Territory News [Australia], 20/9/07. Spotter: John Weston)*



PRIME MINISTERIAL DECREE NO. 16

From the Desk of the Supreme Leader

Comrades,

I am happy to announce that we have reached yet another historic milestone in the long march to reversing the errors of the previous regime under the avaricious viper Blair and his gang of money-grubbing running dogs, led by the obese toady Prescott with his cowboy boots, Stetson hats and other bribes from the Las Vegas-ite leisure complex.

That is why today I have saved the workers of Manchester from a lifetime of slavery to the roulette wheels and slot machines of unbridled one-armed banditism.

Of all the actions of the discredited former leader Blair, none was so offensive to the moral sense of our great Party, and so inappropriate to the new Britain we are working so hard to build in my Age of Change – a Britain where economic prosperity results not from the machinations of Mafia-ite gambling interests and the chance spin of a wheel, but from the wise and prudent decisions of the servants of the State under the guidance of their Great Helmsman, myself.

That is why I have today authorised that, in place of the so-called "Super Casino" planned by the hated ex-Comrade Blair, we shall launch a new programme for the regeneration of our inner cities by the construction of a series of "Self-Advancement Centres" where workers can meet to engage in harmless pastimes dedicated to their own personal enrichment, requiring no manual effort other than the honest pull of a lever and the skilled insertion of a coin inside a slot.

By this means, millions of people from our more deprived urban centres will have the chance to rise out of their Blair-induced poverty to enjoy the fruits of their labour – three oranges, or it may be three bananas.

Signed Gordon Brown

The Supreme Leader Backs Freedom of Information

I have repeatedly reaffirmed my commitment to the freedom of state information, so that all comrades can be made fully aware of the achievements of the Party in building the Age of Change.

It is important to recognise, however, that it is not always prudent to allow the publication of documents recording the deliberations of the Politburo, where these may give rise to misunderstandings which could be damaging to the interests of the State.

For instance, the words "As Chancellor, I am right behind you, Tony, in your very wise decision to invade Iraq" might be taken out of context, and interpreted as meaning that in some way I was personally supportive of the discredited former leader's self-serving and reckless neo-Bushite interventionist international gangsterism.

It would obviously be far better for such a potentially misleading document to be held under lock and key in the State archives for a period of not less than 1,000 years. G.B.

The Spring Party Congress in Birmingham

A rousing 14-hour speech by the Supreme Leader was greeted by a spontaneous standing ovation organised by Comrade Balls. In his speech, Comrade Brown promised to bring about a new Age of Change in which equal opportunities for change would be extended to people of all classes so that they could implement more change than ever before with a common purpose of freeing the nations talents to achieve... er... change.

Comrade Brown's key points

★ New politics ★ Change of politics
★ New change ★ Politics of change
★ Changing change in the Age of Change

©Senator Gordon Obrowna

Measures implemented this week by order of the Supreme Leader

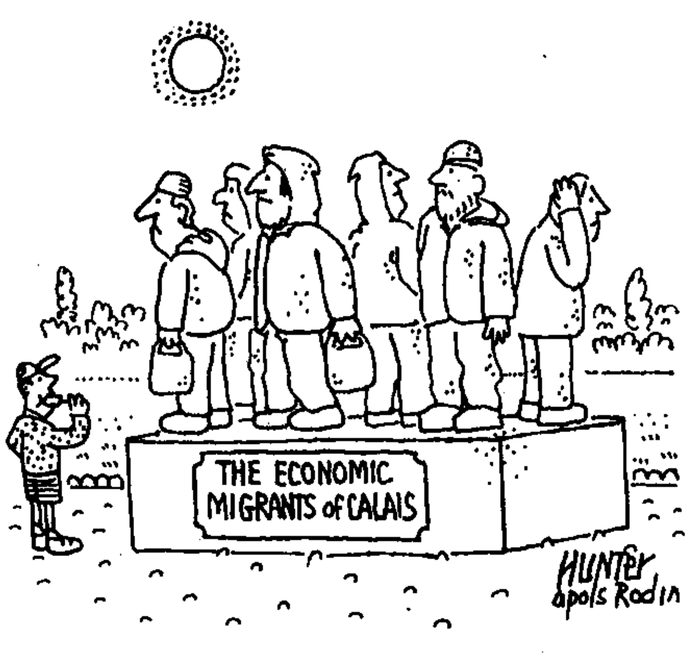
● An end to single use **PLASTIC BAGISM** (Thanks to Comrade Dacre at the People's Daily Mail for this idea. Comrade Dacre's support is invaluable and his newspaper is recommended reading for all comrades in Middle England.)

● An end to **SECOND HOMEISM** – as practised by class traitors and enemies of the people i.e. Hated ex-comrades Blair and Prescott who should be stripped of their luxury properties which should be returned to key workers such as doctors, nurses and hedge fund managers.

● An end to **WELFARE BENEFITISM** for the parasitic vermin feeding off the state. From now on the message must go out. No work, no money! No money, no food! DEATH! Vote Labour.

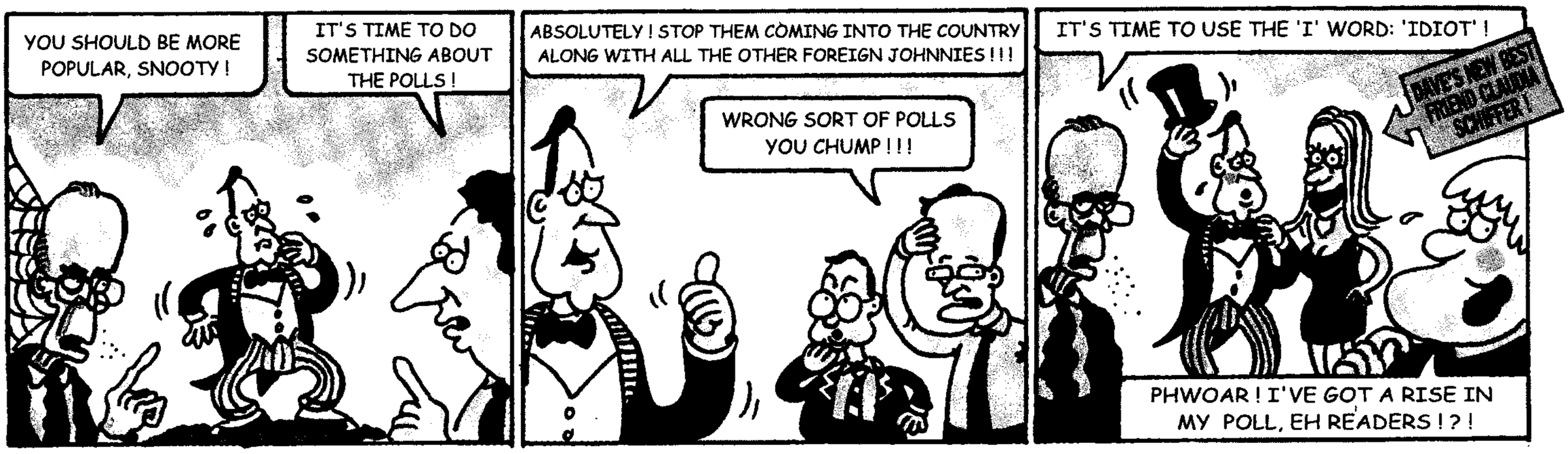
Signed G.B.H.

"We won't be down for a couple of weeks, but you can get hold of us at our London address"

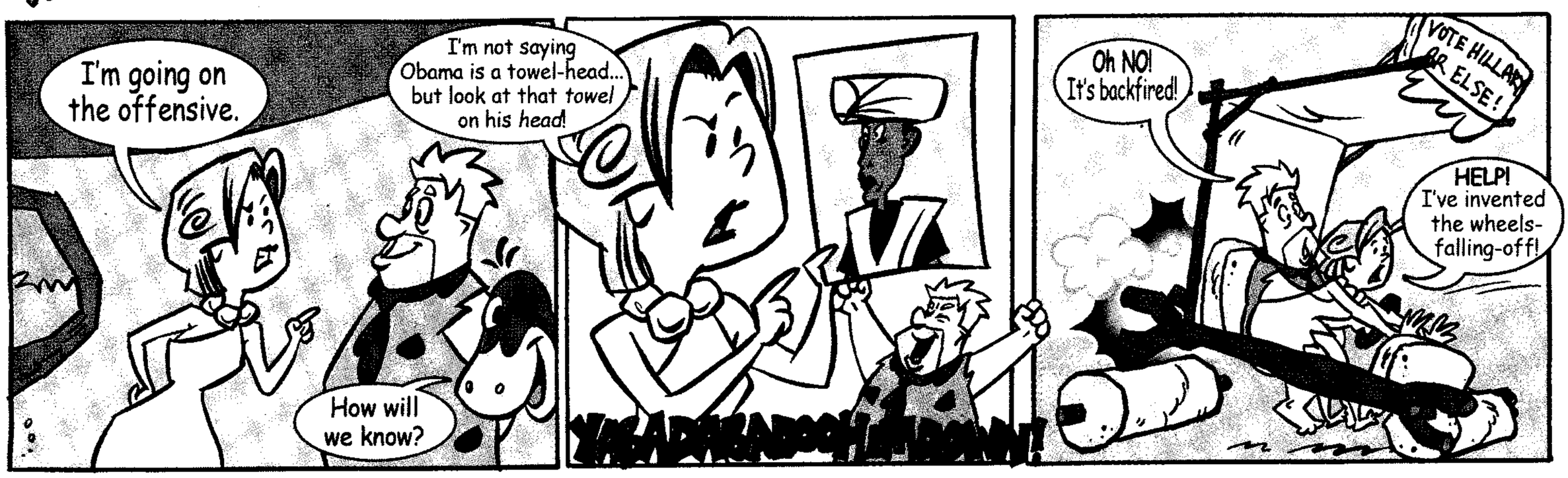


"That's a shame – that was the only exercise our Darren ever got – brushing his teeth"

Dave Snooty AND HIS PALS


YOU SHOULD BE MORE POPULAR, SNOOTY!
IT'S TIME TO DO SOMETHING ABOUT THE POLLS!
ABSOLUTELY! STOP THEM COMING INTO THE COUNTRY ALONG WITH ALL THE OTHER FOREIGN JOHNNIES!!!
WRONG SORT OF POLLS YOU CHUMP!!!
IT'S TIME TO USE THE 'I' WORD: 'IDIOT'!
DAVE'S NEW BEST FRIEND CLAUDIA SCHIFFER!
PHWOAR! I'VE GOT A RISE IN MY POLL, EH READERS!?!

THE BROON-ITES
The McGovernment Messed up by the Monarchy!
Fountain and Jamieson
LET'S FACE THA' FACTS, MILIBROON, ONCE THOSE MEDIA SCUNNERS HAD REVEALED HIS EXACT POSITION, HIS CONTINUED PRESENCE ON THA' FRONT LINE WAS PUTTING EVERYONE AT RISK...
AYE, YOU'RE RICHT THERE, DEZ BROON...
JOCKSHIRE AIRPORT
HENRY DAVIES
FAR BETTER TO RELOCATE HIM SO THERE'S NAE CHANCE O' ANYONE GETTING HURT...
AYE. BEST TO BRING YON PRINCE HARRY BACK TAE BRITAIN...
WHIT? WE'RE NAE SENDIN' HARRY TAE BRITAIN...
WE'RE SENDIN' GORDON TAE AFGHANISTAN!
JOCKSHIRE AIRFORCE
PUSH!
LET ME GAE YE SCUNNERS! MA CAMPAIGN ON CARRIER BAGS IS A REAL VOTE-WINNER!


MEET THE CLINTSTONES - THE PREHISTORIC FIRST FAMILY
I'm going on the offensive.
How will we know?
I'm not saying Obama is a towel-head... but look at that towel on his head!
Oh NO! It's backfired!
VOTE HILLARY OR ELSE!
HELP! I've invented the wheels-falling-off!

Celeb
LIGGER
YOU BACK FROM YOUR CRAFTY SMOKE OUTSIDE THE CLUB ALREADY, DEBS?
UH-HUH... THE PAPARAZZI LOVED IT...
THAT WAS QUICK THOUGH, WASN'T IT?
WELL, IT'S ABSOLUTELY FREEZING OUT THERE, GARY. BRR...
I JUST NEEDED A COUPLE OF PUFFS... THEN I WAS FINE...
ONE ABOUT MY NEW BOOK AND ONE ABOUT THE SWIMWEAR RANGE...
QUOTES AND PHOTOS! THAT'S MY GIRL!

Letters *to the Editor*

Prince Harry's successful mission

SIR – As one of those who served on the North-West frontier and saw at first hand the White Man's Graveyard with the vultures circling overhead as our beleaguered column fought its way through the territory now controlled by Johnny Taliban (note, not "Terry", as the young officers refer to it nowadays), may I say that much as I welcome the acclaim given to the young Prince Harry for doing his duty at the sharp end, I must deplore the length of his hair and the grave failure of his senior officers to ensure that it was kept at regulation length, i.e. ¼ inch above the ears and 1/8 inch from nape to lower cranium. Had *I* come on parade in Kabul looking like a "mop-topped Beatle", I would have been on a charge and spent the rest of my career doing well-earned Field Punishment no.3, i.e. being buried up to my neck in sand and eaten alive by giant ants – the dreaded Talibants, as they were known to generations of British serving men.

Brigadier F.B.J. Newman-Gusset
The Old Tally Barn, Crewcutte, Dorset.

SIR – May I suggest a statue of Prince Harry as the ideal occupant of the empty plinth in Trafalgar Square? Perhaps the square itself should be renamed as Helmand Piazza in honour of the prince's heroic victory over the Taleban.

Rear Admiral Sir Horatio Horn-Concerto (Retired)
The Old Lighthouse, Hartley Wintney.

SIR – In his pursuit of the enemy in Helmand Province perhaps the fox-hunting prince should cry "Tally Ban Ho!".

Michael Giggler
Via email.

Letters and emails

Prince Harry's failed PR stunt

It was totally sickening to read the garbage spouted by the media about Prince Harry's so-called heroic deeds, i.e. murdering innocent Muslims *viz* the popular, democratic and socially responsible Taliban freedom fighters... er... as if they were no more than pheasants on a shoot at Sandringham... er... in itself a disgraceful ritual of mass annihilation by the decadent Royal Fascist Family... er... to suggest that this gung-ho upper class representative of the reactionary military-industrial complex... er... is to be applauded is to my mind totally sickening, particularly at a time when nursery schools are being closed and local post offices are being turned into runways so that American torture flights can land and kidnap...er... Jon Snow put it so well... the really sickening conspiracy is that of the media like Channel 4 er...

Dave Spart
c/o The Back Ken Livingstone, Hang Boris Johnson Campaign, Flat 17b, Rusbridger House, Rowson Road, E94.

Is it not time that Prince Harry was charged with war crimes along with Gordon Brown, Tony "Poodle Blair" and George Bush? Would it not be only just for the prince to be hung from a crane in Baghdad after a fair trial under Sharia Law had found him guilty in the Iraqi courts?

G. Galloway MP
c/o Talk Spart Radio, London.

Surely the prince's service in Afghanistan deserves promotion. Or should that be self-promotion?

Mike Giggler
Via email.

Advertisement

GnomeZac©

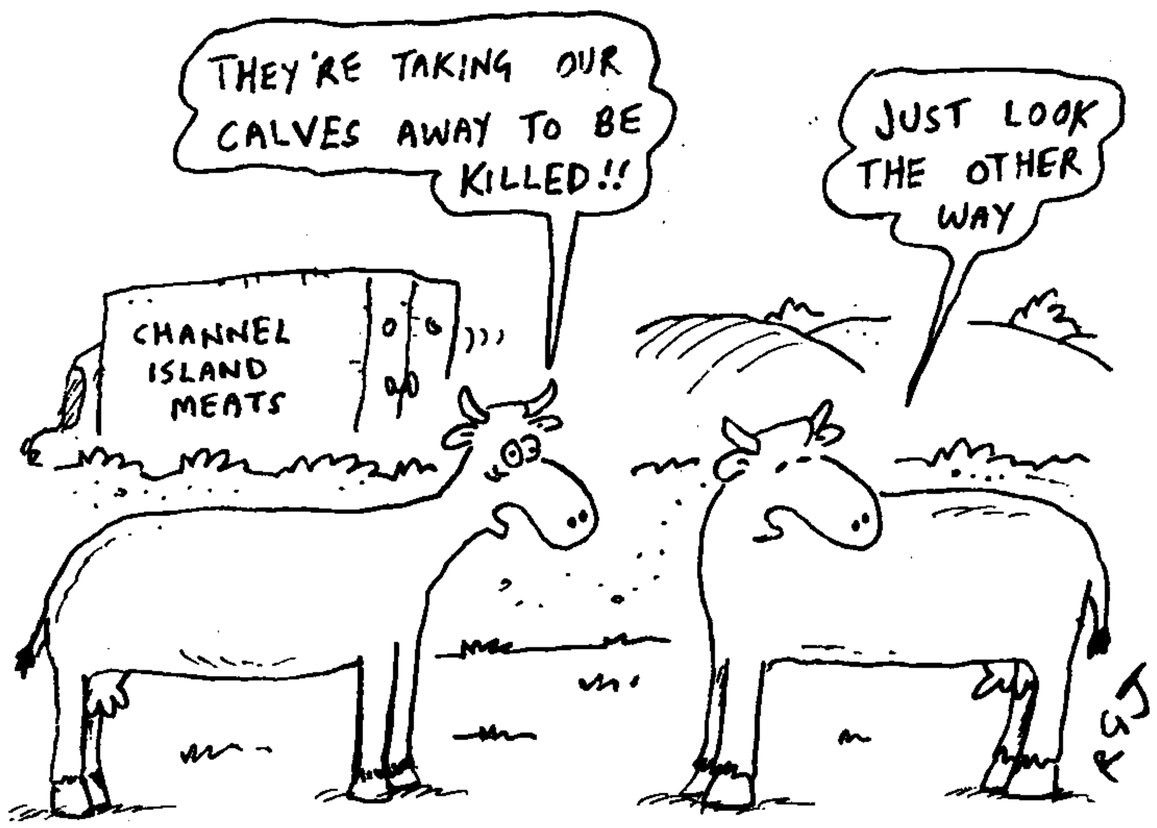
NEW FROM GNOME PHARMACEUTICALS

ARE YOU depressed by the report claiming that anti-depressants don't work?

THEN TRY NEW GnomeZac° – the miracle new drug that makes you happy again.

Said one patient, *"I'm so happy after taking* GnomeZac° *that I'm taking all my other pills again!"*

Gnome Pharmaceuticals – Making Profits Healthy



Jersey cows

The Book of Ehud

1. And lo, it came to pass that the Hamasites that dwelt in the land of Gaza heeded not the warnings of Ehud.
2. And they did rain their rockets, that are called Qassam, upon the sons and daughters of Israel who dwell in the city of Ashkelon.
3. Then the children of Israel waxeth wroth and one of Ehud's council cried aloud, saying:.
4. "Verily, they that dwell in the land of Gaza must be visited with an 'shoah', which is to say 'holocaust'."
5. And Ehud immediately issueth a clarification, saying that the words of his brother had been taken out of context, like unto a fish that hath been taken from the seas and placed upon the dry land, there to perish.
6. And the word 'shoah', he continueth, really meaneth in Hebrew nothing more than "a bit of a smiting".
7. Of the type the dwellers of Gaza are well used to.
8. So that was all right then.
9. And Ehud rose up and girdeth his loins and re-smote the Hamasites even an hundredfold. And there was great wailing and gnashing of teeth.
10. And the nations cried aloud, saying, "The smiting must cease. There must be a cease-smite."
11. But Ehud answered them and said, "Get ye stuffed like unto the olive that is filled with anchovy or pimento when it is placed in the cocktails that are served on the beaches of Eilat (Three Nights for the Price of One)."
12. And all the peoples of the Middle East saith with one voice, "Thanks be to Tony Blair, whose peace mission goeth so well."

(To be continued)

The Ballad Of Speaker Martin

By Sir William Rees-McGonagall

Now gather ye round, guid men and true
For I have a tale to tell to you.
I tell the story of Speaker Martin,
A bonnie lad frae the land of the tartan.

He was born of humble folk in Glasgie toon –
On the social scale ye couldnae gang further doon.
Barefoot wee Michael walked the cobbled streets
Until he got a job hammering metal sheets.

His fellow workers soon chose him as their leader,
Saying "Yon Mick Martin is a canny wee bleeder."
And so he became a Union boss
And for the greedy capitalists he gave ne'er a toss.

In time he was elected as a Labour MP –
Springburn was the name of his constituency.
So our Scottish hero came down to take his seat
In the Mother of Parliaments, which was no mean feat.

For years and years no one even knew his name
Let alone from whence he came.
Until one day as fate transpired
The well-loved Speaker, Betty Boothroyd, suddenly retired.

When the MPs neeeded her successor to pick
Who did they choose but the unknown Mick?
For the bemused Mr Martin it was his lucky day –
A cushy job and loads of extra pay.

So see him now, enthroned in glory.
On one side Labour, the other Tory.
With his buckled shoes and braided gown
Was there any finer sight in London town?

There he presided, shouting "Order! Order!"
This once-humble lad frae north o' the border.
But alack for the hapless Glasgie lad,
At being the Speaker he turned out to be extremely bad.

Bumbling and stumbling, he made such a mess
That it eventually caught the attention of the press.
"These slurs on my reputation are making me sick,"
Said Martin. "Why, they are calling me 'Gorbals Mick'."

"These jumped-up toffs from their public schools
Are accusing *me* of breaking Parliamentary rules.
This is just an attack on the working class.
That Quentin Letts from the *Daily Mail* can kiss my arse."

It must be admitted that Mick could be quite coarse.
He could scream profanities until his voice was hoarse.
He had even been heard to shout, "Oh f*ck!
Get me the services of libel lawyers Carter Ruck!"

But the more he protested, the deeper the hacks dug
And the smile on Mick's face became ever less smug.
Every day there came a new revelation
To shock the hard-working folk of the British nation.

Taxis to Tesco for his wife to go shopping
For items of food such as tomato pizza topping.
Free travel by air for his wife and his bairns
Worth almost as much as the average man earns.

Soon there arose a universal shout –
"It's time to throw yon auld booby out!
Of this posturing ninny, we are heartily sick.
It's time for ye to gang awa', ye ghastly Gorbals Mick!"

And so ends the tale of Speaker Martin
Who soon frae his office will be departin'.
And what is the moral of this tragic story?
They'd have been better off choosing some terrible old Tory.

© World Copyright Rabbi Burns

Han-z-z-zard

2.30pm The arrival of the Speaker, Mr Michael Gorbals, attended by the Sergeant-at-Arms Sir Hugo Voletrouser and his Chaplain, the Rev. Archibald Flannel.

Sergeant-at-Arms: Hats off to the Speaker!!

Mr Speaker: Order! Order! I call on the leaders of the three main political parties to support me, as arranged.

Mr Gordon Brown, the Prime Minister: Mr Speaker, may I take this opportunity to offer my unreserved support in light of the disgraceful and outrageous campaign of vilification orchestrated against you by the press. *(Cheers from all corners of the House)*

Mr David Cameron *(Leader of the Opposition)*: May I for the first time in my life agree with everything the Prime Minister has said. And may I go further. In attacking the Speaker for fiddling his expenses, these journalists have been attacking every member of this House. *(MPs wave order papers, expenses chits, etc, in full agreement)*

Mr David Clogg (Leader of the Shadow Shadow Opposition): May I first tell everyone who I am? And may I then express the total support of all Liberal Democrat MPs for you, sir, as the Speaker? You have shown a shining example to every member of this House by the ground-breakingly ingenious way in which you have shown us all how to recycle our air miles to the advantage of our families.

(Lib Dem MPs walk out en masse in full support of their leader)

Mr Speaker: Disorder! Disorder!

NEW STAMP OFFER

A NEW set of stamps was issued today by the Royal Mail to commemorate Great British Hypocrites.

The stamps depict senior ministers who are campaigning to save the post offices in their constituencies despite the Government's policy of national closures.

A spokesperson for the Royal Mail said, "You can buy these stamps at your local post office – or you probably can't."

Daily Eye
FRIDAY, 7 MARCH, 2008

JOIN OUR CAMPAIGN TO SAVE THE PLANET BY BANNING THIS TIDAL WAVE OF DANGEROUS RUBBISH

By Our Environmental Staff
Polly Vinyl-Chloride

EVERY DAY Britons consume 2 million copies of the Daily Mail.

They are used for just a few seconds and then thrown away.

Every year that makes a rubbish mountain 14 times higher than Everest.

The entire country is now polluted with several billion tons of discarded Daily Mails, filling our streets, fields, rivers and seas with the disgusting detritus of Britain's most toxic newspaper.

From one end of the country to the other, wildlife is dying – poisoned by articles by Geoffrey Levy, Amanda Platell and Richard Littlejohn, not to mention cartoons by Mac and Mahood.

Last night top celebrities were lining up to back our campaign to clean up Britain, among them top ex-newsreader Angela Rippon, former *That's Life* star Esther Rantzen, the late Hughie Green and Tory MP David Cameron.

One of Britain's most beautiful woodlands is disfigured by millions of copies of the Daily Mail littering our once green and pleasant land

Banish The Mail

Now you too can back our campaign by signing this coupon and sending it to the Prime Minister.

Dear Prime Minister,

I would like to register my very deep concern at the environmental damage being done to Britain and the world by the Daily Mail.

Please stop sucking up to Paul Dacre and banish this horrible product forever.

Signed.....

POLLY FILLER

SO, modern children are dissatisfied with their lives because they are too consumerist? Well, not in the Filler household. My toddler is one of the most well-balanced and contented kids in the whole of St Tweezles Special Class For Differently Able Children!

And Charlie certainly doesn't spend his whole life pestering his parents for Playstations, Nintendos and i-phones.

No. Charlie would far rather sit down and read a good catalogue – then show off his computer skills by ordering all the latest technology on-line, using our credit cards! (Or, rather, *my* credit card, since my partner, the Useless Simon, has had his cut up for running up Internet Poker debts, playing Texas Fold 'Em on *www.letzloosmoneyfast.com* with TV's Victoria Coren!)

And Charlie doesn't follow *me* around fancy department stores all day, nagging me to buy him ludicrously expensive designer brands. That's because I am at work and he is busy at home learning Cantonese from our new girl from Taiwan, No Pei.

Apparently, he can already say, "I am homesick and hungry and want go to back to my village". Bless!!

SO, don't tell me that we are bringing up a generation of greedy little monsters. All it takes is sensible supervision by a responsible adult figure who is willing to set boundaries and devote the necessary time to the child's well-being.

So, three cheers for Charlie's psychotherapist, Dr Beard, for putting in the hours! And, for your information, Doctor, the reason I can't spend more time with Charlie is because I have to work 8 days a week to pay your absurd fees!

©*Polly Filler, author of best-selling "Yummy Money – How To Cope With Being Less Successful Than Me!" (Pearson & Johnson, £14.99).*

"Ohmigod – you've made me look so fat!"

Film Highlights

Charlie Galore! (PG)

HILARIOUS Ealing comedy about a huge consignment of cocaine which washes up on a Cornish beach.

The fun starts when local fishermen find the drug right under their noses! And before the police can stop them they have all joined the Groucho Club and decided to pursue careers in the media.

You'll laugh, you'll cry, you'll go to the toilet, you'll laugh again, you'll pitch a project to Channel 4, you'll plunge into depression!

Cast in full

Cornish Fishermen.....Pete Doherty
Cornish Landlady.....Amy Winehouse
Cornish Policeman.....Brian Paddick

POETRY CORNER

In Memoriam Emily Perry: Dame Edna Everage's companion Madge Allsop

So. Farewell
Then Madge
Allsop.

You were Dame Edna's
Bridesmaid.

What was your
Catchphrase?

A trick question.
Because you never said
Anything.

E.J. Thribb (aged 17½)

THE Sun

BUSH SLAMS APPOINTMENT

PRESIDENT Bush has attacked the appointment of Raul Castro as the new president of Cuba.

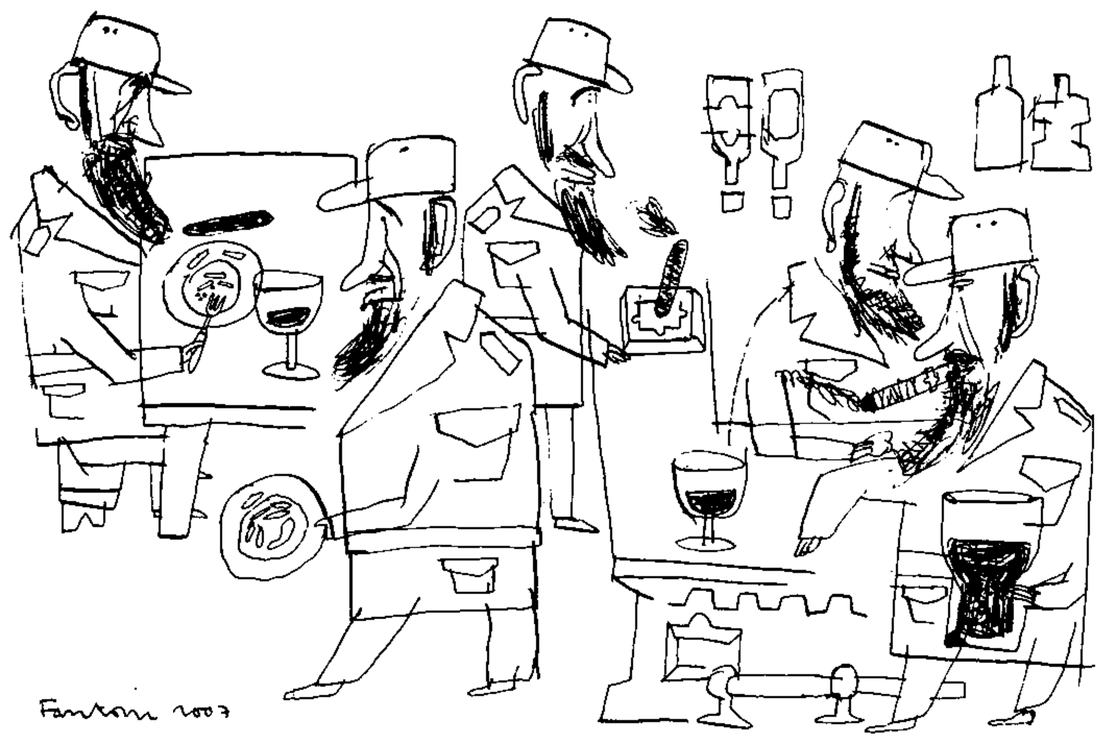
"He's got no mandate from the people, and only has the job because he's a relative of the former president.

"Who does this guy think he is?"

The Sun Says

IT IS simply unbelievable in this modern day and age that an ageing despot who has been allowed to rule unquestioned for decades through a mixture of fear and intimidation could be allowed to manoeuvre a close relative into a position of power within his inner circle, for the sole reason of establishing him as his natural successor.

Such flagrant acts of blatant nepotism by *(You're fired. Rupert M.)*



Castro pub

From The Message Boards

Members of the online community respond to the major issues of the day...

Calls For National DNA Database

Nice idea but not thoaght through. As always the inocent/decent will obbay but criminel scum will simply change there DNA. ***Steve***

Terrorist Training Camp Leader Arrested

Islam-ic scumbag Mohammed Hamid calls his-self Osamer Bin London? idiot!! Do'snt even know its OSAMAR BIN LEYTON! Read the paper's numpty then you mite LEARN some-thing like how to spel you're hero's name!! lol!! ***Martin***

Majority Favour Capital Punishment

I have followed the debate about capital punishment for many years, and am well versed in the arguments of both sides. Although by inclination a "pro", my hand was always stayed by the possibility of a miscarriage of justice such as that of the policeman and war hero John Christie, who was executed despite the fact that Timothy Evans had already been hanged for identical murders committed in the same house. Evans later received a pardon under home secretary Roy Jenkins (who else?).

Now that DNA makes such tragic mistakes unlikely, I feel that the time is right for a compromise. Give them a decent spell in prison (say 10 years) and then, if no new evidence comes to light, hang them by the neck until they be dead. They will have had time to reflect and, one hopes, agonise over their wrongdoing, and then they will receive a humane exit. This seems eminently reasonable and indubitably civilised. Of course, the bureaucrats of Brussels will never allow it, but one day we'll be shot of them too. I have written a number of pamphlets on these matters, and copies remain if anyone would like to contact me. ***Edwin***

Edwin, your 2 right bruv imo better innocent man hang than no-won hang. I will do it no prob. Give me the rope. lol!! ***Zak***

Drug Addicts To Lose Benefits

Drug's are number one problem defo, and spreading like wild flour. but the solution is much more simpler than experts (lol!) say for there ridiculous pay packet's for the stupid answer's they come up with. Simple solution: instead of "quit-ing" drug's, don't take drug's in the first place. End of.

Wears my million pounds? O sorry probably already spent it on some drug programme for ilegel immigrant's!! ***Dave***

Attacks On Fire Crews Increasing

Give firefighter's gun's instead of hose's then w'ell see whose so brave. Scum! ***Cordelia***

INQUIRY LAUNCHED INTO BREACH OF PARLIAMENTARY SECURITY

By Our Westminster Staff
Michael Heathrow

A GROUP of undesirable political activists managed to trick their way into the House of Commons last week and staged a noisy demonstration in front of the world's media.

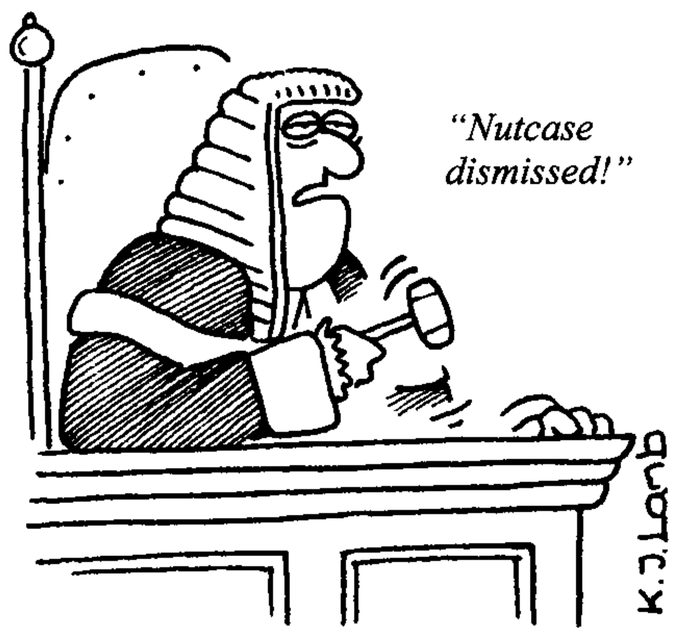
Brownpeace

The group led by known troublemaker Gordon Brown chanted slogans and appeared on television in order to disrupt parliamentary business.

"We think it was an inside job," said a security expert. "We believe Tony Blair let Gordon and his gang in. They then ran amok doing whatever they wanted – which was nothing very much."

An urgent inquiry is now looking to find how Brown managed to avoid the stringent security systems that normally prevent unelected extremists running the *(cont. p. 94)*

End of Diana Inquest



Advertisement

HOUSE CLEARANCE

TATE MODERN will come round to your house and take away all your old rubbish – dead sheep, large tables and chairs, old photographs etc, for a nominal fee of £150 million.

Says Mr A. D'Offay of Bond Street, "Frankly, I thought I was stuck with this junk for ever, but now it's all gone!"

TATE IT AWAY!

Oscar Frocks Shocks!

By Our Resident Fashion Editor **Liz Slagg**

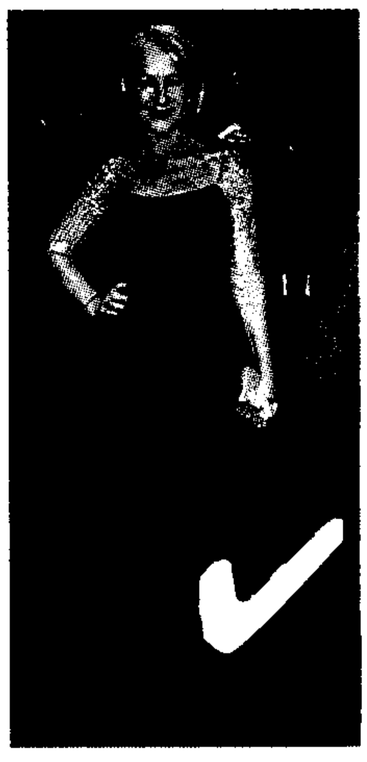
IT'S Oscar time again, folks, and as usual we've got our fair share of frocks that rock and dresses that depress us!

Cameron Diazz-les us with a graceful off-pink number that promises salmon-chanted evenings!

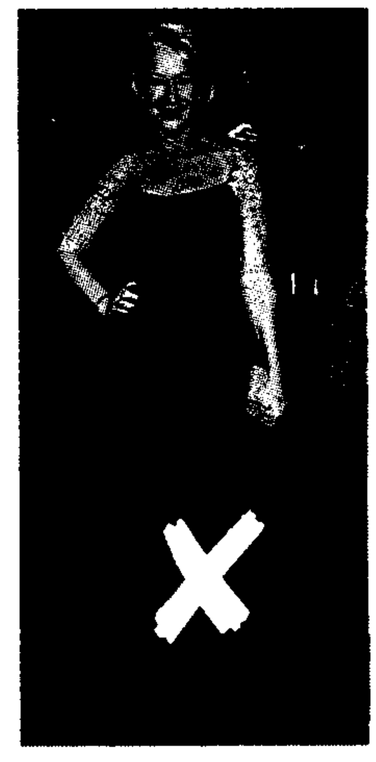
Ouch! **Camer-ingue Diaz**'s fussy frills make her look more like there's something about Meringue than Mary!

Bridget Jones's Dire-ry! Note in today's entry, **Renée**, dated shiny stuff, v. v. bad!

Renée Swell-weger, certainly keeps up with the Jones's in this stunning sparky number!



Dame, set and match to **Helen Mirren** for showing off her right royal figure



Off with her hem! This shapeless sight will have even the Queen seeing red!

(That's enough. Ed.)

Millions Sleep Through Killer Quake

What You Were Too Terrified To Listen To

That Radio Four Today programme in full

Jim Naughtie *(for it is he)*: And news is just coming through that Britain has been shaken by its worst earthquake for hundreds of years, measuring an astonishing 0.0001 on the Richter Scale.

Our reporter at the epicentre of what they are already calling "the worst earthquake for hundreds of years" is Ranjit Wapshott in Market Barkworth in Lincolnshire. Ranjit, what can you tell us?

Wapshott: Well, Jim, I'm here at Market Barkworth in Lincolnshire, the epicentre of what they are already describing as "the worst earthquake for hundreds of years".

Naughtie: Tell us about the bodies, Ranjit. How many have you seen?

Wapshott: Well, Jim, from where I'm standing I can't see many bodies because no one's died.

Naughtie: So, what you're saying, Ranjit, is that the grim toll of this killer quake is nil.

Wapshott: That's certainly what I'm hearing down here, Jim. No bodies as yet.

Naughtie: But there must be smoking piles of rubble, where the emergency services are working desperately round the clock as they hear faint cries of help from trapped toddlers. Is that the kind of thing?

Wapshott: Not exactly, Jim, there hasn't actually been much structural damage, but a number of people I've spoken to said that they thought something funny was going on in the middle of the night.

Naughtie: So a grim scenario indeed. Thanks, Ranjit, and we'll come back to you later in the programme in the hope that you will have been able to interview someone who has died in what they are calling "the worst killer quake" for hundreds of years. And now it's time for Thought For The Day. In the studio we have the Chief Thetan, the reincarnated N. Ron Hubbard.

Chief Thetan: Hullo Jim, hullo Carolyn. You know, as I was coming here this morning in my spacecraft, I heard the dreadful news of this terrible killer earthquake which had reduced London to rubble and I thought how lucky we Thetans are not to have that kind of thing on our planet in East Grinstead

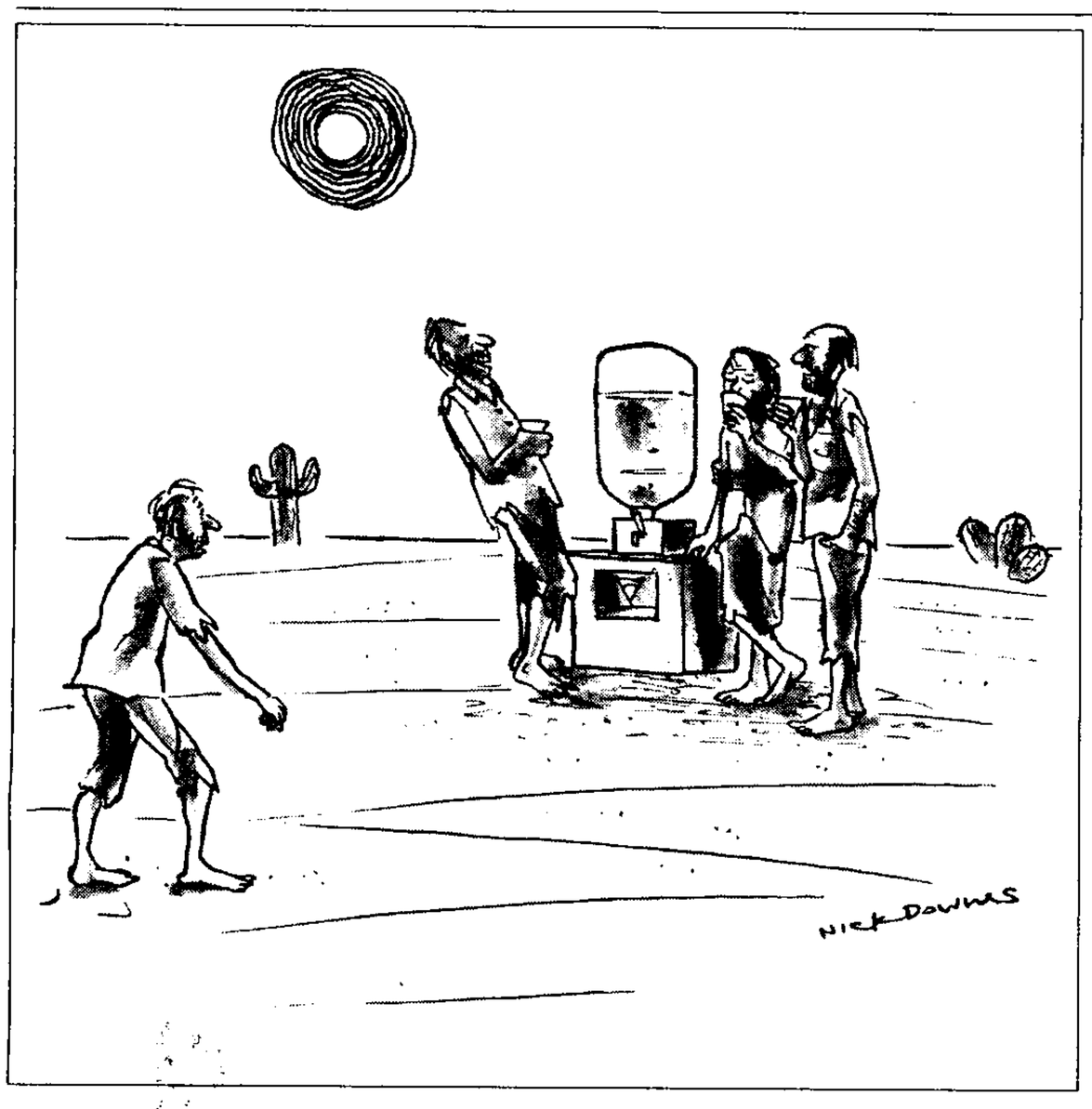
(cont. 94 kHz)

POLICE LOG

Neasden Central Police Station

0913 hrs 17 officers deployed to Islington to surround the property of a suspected dealer in international antiquities. After a tip off from an informer who had read a column in the Daily Telegraph written by the suspect, a Mr Boris Johnson was interviewed at length by the Neasden Cultural Artefacts Unit (PCs Whetstone and Ongar) over his alleged theft of a cigar case, formerly the property of a Mr King Nebuchadnezzar residing in the city of Babylon. The suspect denied the theft of Mr Nebuchadnezzar's antique Assyrian cigar case (estimated street value £2 billion, not including cigars), claiming that he had "just found it on the floor" and had "kept it as a souvenir of the overthrow of the late Saddam Hussein". The officers concluded that this was a totally implausible explanation for the theft, which was clearly part of a long-planned antiquities smuggling exercise, and returned to the informer, known only as "Red K", for further instructions. Since the informer is a close personal friend of Sir Ian Blair, officers concluded that they could trust everything he says, and they remain confident that Mr Johnson will soon be behind bars where he belongs.

1232 hrs A series of calls from female members of the public were recorded on the station answering machine, calling for assistance in respect of at least 93 attacks on themselves by known serial killers and repeat sexual offenders. Unfortunately, no officers were available for deployment as they were all engaged on other duties – viz interviewing Boris Johnson, arresting 91-year-old war hero Wing Commander Prunehat for non-payment of £2.65 in Council Tax, and erecting notices around the district reading "Police Are Operating In This Area".



RUSSIAN ELECTIONS IN FULL

PUTINGRAD SOUTH

Dimitri Medvedev, The Not Putin Oh No Not Me I'm Independent Party ..... **600 million**

Igor Stroganov, Neo-Stalinist Party **36**

The Late Ivana Die, People's Democratic Alliance Party..... **0**

110% swing to Putin.

SIBERIA NORTH

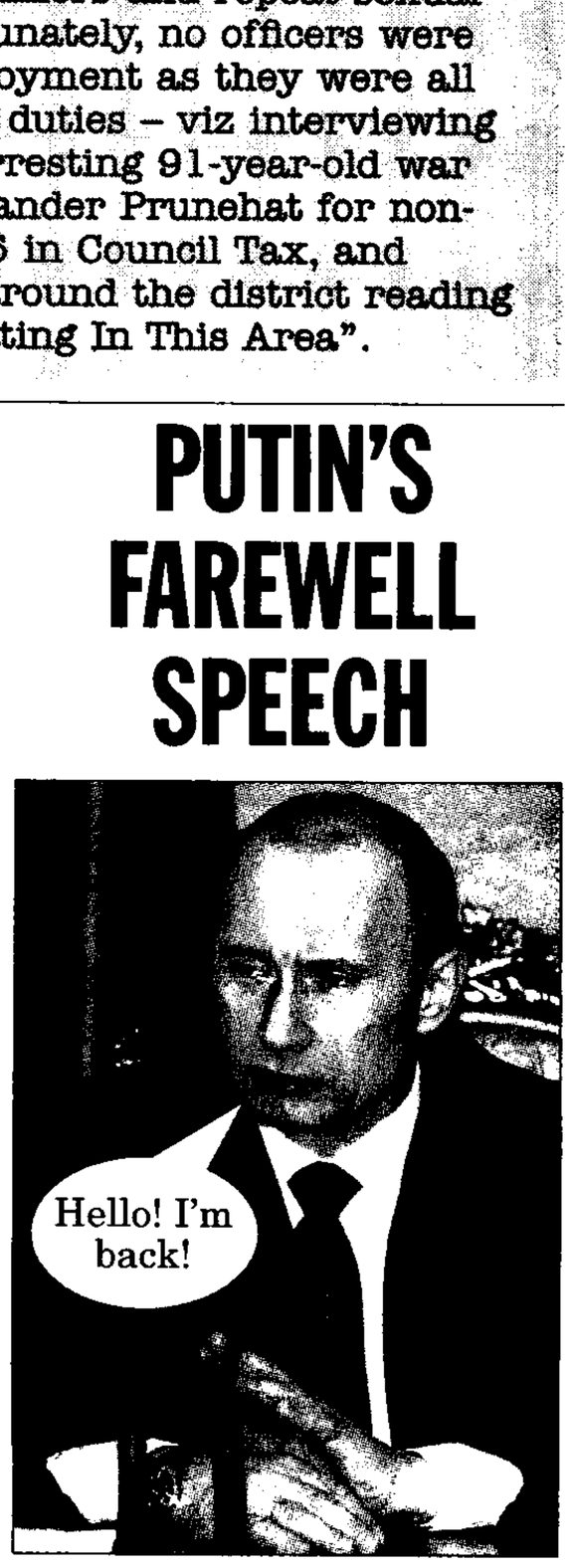
Oleg Dedski, United Opposition Movement..... **0° Centigrade**

Nikolai Gulag, Bring Back Glasnost Coalition..... **-37°F**

Czar Putin the First (Vlad the Impaler), Monster Raving Loonin Party ..... **700 million**

No change ever again.

PUTIN'S FAREWELL SPEECH



DIARY

CLARISSA EDEN

It was whilst staying at Wombats with Cecil Beaton that I first set eyes on Isaiah Berlin. He was a small dark man, his head packed full of thoughts, many of them interesting.

At dinner that night, I sat between Isaiah and Pablo Picasso. Pablo was also a small dark man, but he was seated to my right whereas Isaiah was seated to my left, so to tell them apart was relatively simple.

Pablo was clever, but very Spanish, unashamedly so. He had nevertheless made quite a name for himself as a painter. Sadly, his accent was extreme, so I spent most of the dinner simply nodding, but one of his sayings has lodged in my mind to this very day. Over an overcooked main course of veal with spinach and mashed potato, he turned to me abruptly and said: "Could you pass the salt, please?" Fortuitously, the 18th century salt-cellar was within easy reach, so I was able to fulfil the polite request of this remarkable little fellow. I heard much later that he was a ladies' man, but he made no approach to me on that occasion.

There were always the most fascinating people to meet. On another occasion, I was placed next to Lord Buchanan. He was, he informed me excitedly, an ambassador to a foreign country. I politely asked him which but he couldn't remember, though he knew it was definitely abroad because he couldn't understand a thing they said. It's name was on the tip of his tongue; he was pretty sure it began with a B or an S.

On my other side was Igor Stravinsky, the well-known composer. He was neither very tall nor very short, but if he had been it wouldn't have mattered as for most of the time we were both sitting down. He held forth on the subject of music, to the exclusion of all else. After a good few minutes of this, I sought to change the subject. "Would you agree with me that this lamb is a little overdone?" I inquired. All these years later, I cannot remember his reply, but it can't have been interesting. He had no real conversation.

In Paris, I met but did not talk to Albert Camus, the French author. He was clever, but very French. He was to die tragically young in a motor accident, but not before writing some remarkable books. On my return from France, I went to the West End to see a work by William Shakespeare, the prolific playwright and master of words. Afterwards, I had dinner with John Gielgud, the leading man. Even at that relatively young age, he was losing his hair, but he did not mention it, and nor, out of courtesy, did I. He went on to star in many roles. The Dover Sole was excellent, the carrots a little tough.

During the first half of the 1940s, the 2nd World War was particularly intrusive, which was tiresome. At some point during the Thirties, I was placed next to the German Chancellor, Adolf Hitler. The dinner consisted of a fine venison stew accompanied by potatoes dauphinoise. Adolf Hitler had a well-known temper, but I did not see it. Our talk revolved around a new musical in the West End, which he had not seen, and nor had I. I told him that I had been reliably informed by Sacheverell that it was quite marvellous, with colourful costumes, extravagant settings and a number of good tunes. He promised me he would try to catch it if ever he managed to reach Britain. I noticed that he used his napkin quite sparingly: unusual, I thought, for an Austrian.

Lady Diana Cooper was a lifelong beauty, famous for wearing impossibly large hats. I once asked her why she wore such big hats. Her reply was delightful.

In response to another question, asked some years later, she told me that the answer was yes – but only in some respects!

I now forget what the question was exactly. Dickie Mountbatten may have been in the room at the time. Dickie was very proud of his suede riding boots, and rightly so.

In the early 1950s I married Anthony Eden, a politician of above average height, with a prominent moustache. Anthony was not an intellectual by any means, nor was he an inspiring writer or orator, but he was an immaculate dresser and very much looked the part.

When, a year or two later, my husband became Prime Minister, it was a feather in his cap, but he would often complain within my hearing that Colonel Nasser was being most frightfully tiresome. "I wish the wretched fellow would stop trying to get his hands on the Suez Canal – it simply isn't his to take," Anthony would grumble. If Nasser had known how upset the whole business made Anthony I'm sure he wouldn't have persisted in his mischief. Nasser was clever, but very Egyptian. Eventually, we were forced to send in our warships, an absolute bother, though they were a very pretty silvery-grey in colour, with the barest hint of pink.

The White House in Washington was nothing to write home about, and much smaller than one might have expected, in fact altogether very Haslemere. President Eisenhower was said to be the most powerful man in the world, but I did not find him so. In fact quite the opposite, with little taste in home decoration. He looked utterly blank when I suggest it might look more distinguished and "in keeping" as The Beige House or at very least The Off-White House. Clever, I suppose; but also very American.

Our weekends were spent relaxing at Chequers. It was a 'stockbroker-with-taste' sort of place, very Tudor, very Bucks, but the luxury was heavenly.

We once entertained President Khruschev and Marshal Bulganin there, both clever but very Russian. I placed President Khruschev next to Maurice Bowra. Maurice entertained him with hilarious stories of Bobbety Musgrove staying at Pringles with the Dotty Herberts and getting into the most frightful trouble with the Snubby Boothams in the 1920s. We learnt afterwards that Khruschev didn't know the Musgroves or for that matter the Herberts or the Snubby Boothams, and had never even been to Pringles.

The following week, Anthony told us that the Cold War had taken a turn for the worse – very tiresome, given all the effort to which we had gone.

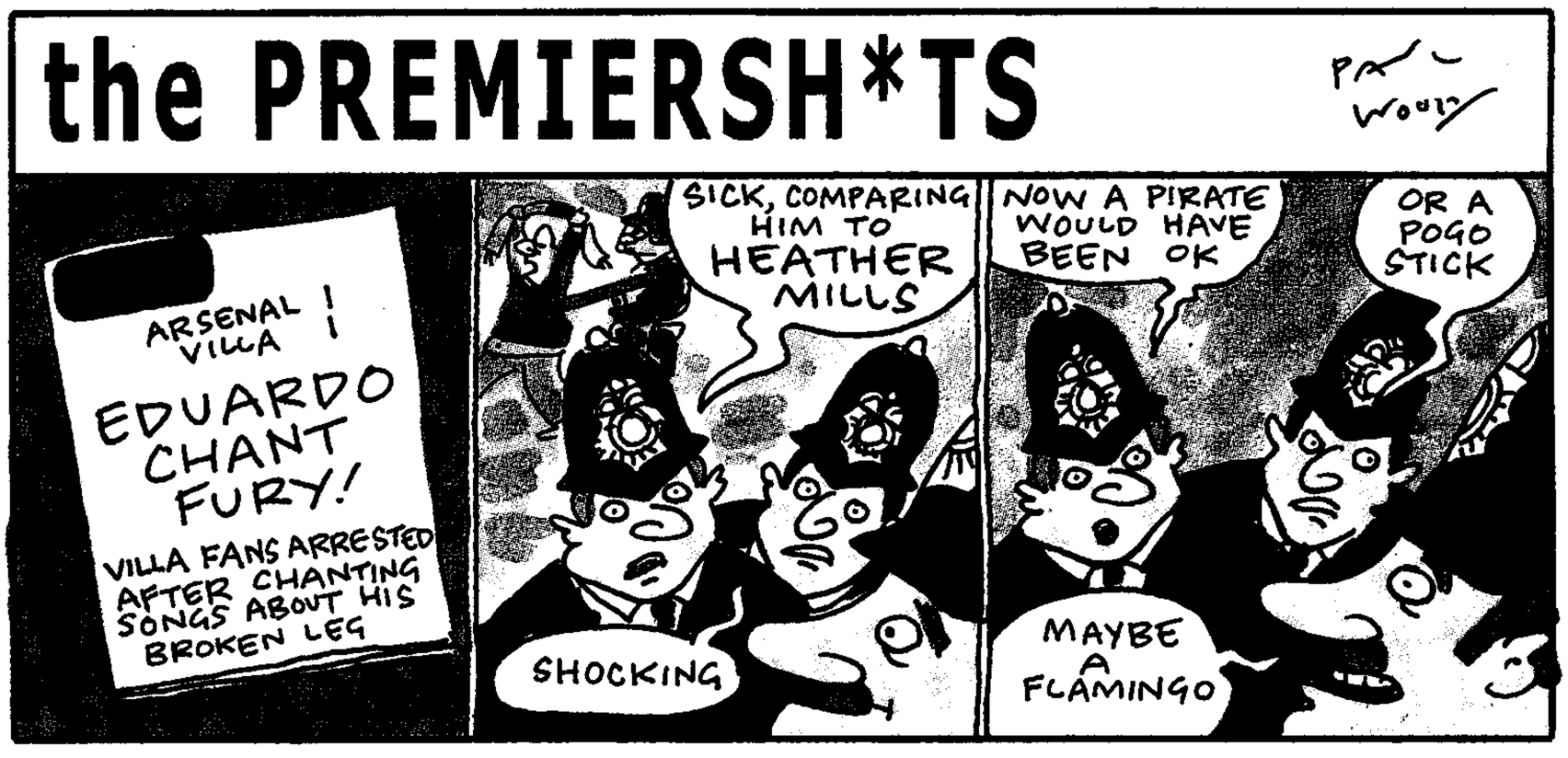
As told to
CRAIG BROWN

Transsexual in Iran

9PM BBC2

In Iran, being gay is punishable by death, yet sex-change operations are legal, the country carrying out more ops than anywhere except Thailand.

Independent


the PREMIERSH*TS
PAUL WOOLLEY
ARSENAL ! VILLA !
EDUARDO CHANT FURY!
VILLA FANS ARRESTED AFTER CHANTING SONGS ABOUT HIS BROKEN LEG
SICK, COMPARING HIM TO HEATHER MILLS
SHOCKING
NOW A PIRATE WOULD HAVE BEEN OK
OR A POGO STICK
MAYBE A FLAMINGO

Literary Review

Shrink rapped

The New Black: Mourning, Melancholia and Depression

Darian Leader

(Hamish Hamilton, £17.99)

LITERARY London's idea of the fashionable changes with startling rapidity. A year or so ago the bookshop tables were groaning with social histories of immediately post-war England. Then, all of a sudden, it was state-of-the-nation novels from the Thatcher to Blair years. Now, extraordinary to relate, it's shrinks.

They come in the shape of a big fat historical tome by Ms Lisa Appignanesi (*Mad, Bad and Sad: A History of Women and the Mind Doctors from 1800 to the Present*, Virago £25); Hanif Kureishi's new novel *Something to Tell You* (Faber £16.99), which is about a trendy psychoanalyst; and Mr Darian Leader – who really is a trendy psychoanalyst – adding to the considerable furrow ploughed by works like *Promises Lovers Make When It Gets Late* with a slim little volume about depression.

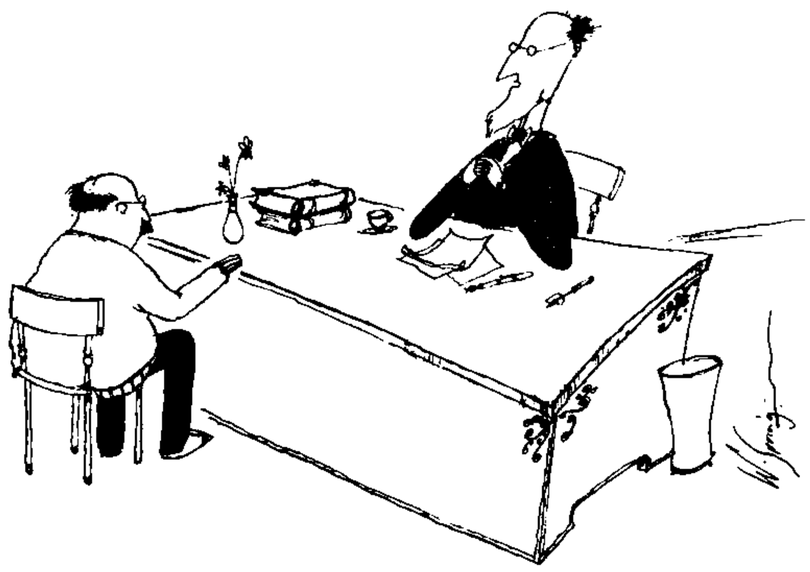
Like most literary movements, this one is horribly incestuous and glad-handing. Lisa's big pre-publication piece in the *Guardian Saturday Review*, about shrinks in fiction, carried approving name-checks for Kureishi and Salley Vickers. Who did the *Guardian* get to review *Mad, Bad and Sad*? Why, Ms Vickers herself, who positively abased herself in the shadow of Ms Appinganesi's towering achievements. Meanwhile, Darian is enthusiastically keeping the party going: thanking his chum Hanif in the preface, quoting Lisa appreciatively in the text and emblazoning her review of a previous outing on the back jacket.

The New Black's opening gambit found itself mirrored in last month's headlines about the uselessness of most anti-depressants. Depression, it turns out, is mostly cooked up by the pharmaceutical industry which proposes a mechanistic, chemical solution to a series of precise, individual problems that really need the touch of a fine analytical mind such as that of Mr Leader here. At the heart of it, purportedly, lies that ancient Freudian sense of loss: only by thinking hard about "mourning and melancholia" can we dig down beneath the surface of our minds to uncover the real problems that crackle within.

There follows a brisk, 200-page professional's calling card, of a kind with which readers of Adam Phillips' annual despatches from his consulting room will be rather familiar: full of eye-catching illustrations from art and literature and falling over itself in its haste to call a spade a large blunt instrument used for the redeployment of earth. There are perhaps four main objections to these psychoanalytical primers so regularly thrown to an impressionable public. One is that so much of what is set down in them, however decked about with professional jargon, seems thoroughly obvious (Leader on the symptoms of bereavement: "Everyday activities, like going to the shops, walking in a park, going to the cinema or being in certain parts of one's city, suddenly become incredibly painful.")

Another is that nothing in psychoanalysis is ever allowed to have a life of its own: everything is symbolic of something else. The five year old whose father dies and who conceals himself in a suitcase is inevitably constructing his private coffin. The phobic who draws pictures of dogs is, of course, "choosing an animal rich in symbolic density". But what if the five year old simply liked sitting in a suitcase, or the phobic merely fancied drawing dogs? A serial killer who collects stamps doesn't have to refocus his obsessions through philately. Then again, all the illustrations used to reinforce behavioural modes are exceptional rather than mundane. All very well quoting Shakespeare or Patricia Highsmith, but how many analysands are replicating *Hamlet* or the brooding unease of Highsmith's creepy villains?

And clanging above practically every statement made here is the tocsin of professional infallibility. It might all sound a load of rubbish, but you see, *I'm a psychoanalyst and I know*. Barely a page about the necessity to "kill the dead" or loss as "anal ejection" passes without Leader calmly defending his corner: "This simplistic criticism completely misses the point...The fact that affection and hatred are so closely linked in our emotional life is still... difficult for most people to accept." Argument is useless, because the psychoanalyst made the rules and sceptical Joe Public can only bow his humble head. Several of the *The New Black*'s own symbolic moments, though, are those of simple misjudgement and overstatement. I was particularly amused by Leader's account of John Cleese's address at Graham Chapman's funeral. Cleese's mock-furious harangue about a "freeloading bastard" apparently "voiced the fury at Chapman's untimely departure latent in all those who had loved him". Did it? I seem to remember an embarrassed-looking William Rushton emerging to remark that, clearly, care in the community wasn't working. Complexity, you see, is just as much of a construct as psychoanalysis.



*"You're depressed you say? I think that's for **me** to decide"*

Books & Bookmen

■ PHILIPPA Gregory had the smart idea of turning Tudor history into chick lit in *The Other Boleyn Girl* and has been rewarded with two sales-boosting screen adaptations of her novel in five years.

Naturally she has capitalised on the latest version, more luxurious but less plausibly cast, with Natalie Portman as Anne Boleyn and Scarlett Johansson as her sister Mary, by penning gleeful lucky-old-me articles in the *Times*, *Telegraph*, *Mail on Sunday* and *Guardian* that managed to promote the films while subtly conveying that her fiction had psychological or historical depths no cinema version could achieve. But has success gone to her head? In the *Telegraph* magazine, Gregory grandiosely claimed that her background "as a trained historian" led to her ("without realising it") "inventing a new way of writing the historical novel in which the 'history' part of the equation is just as important as the 'novel' part" – not just sexier, cannily written and without irksome pseudo-Tudor language (better than Jean Plaidy, in other words) but an advance on historical novels of any period. She may indeed be innovative in revealing the typical washing regime and underwear of a 16th-century royal mistress, but her claims to superior scholarship have been torpedoed by another even more famous Tudor historian, Lady Antonia Fraser.

"As to Mary's child during her Carey marriage, who is featured as the unquestioned son of Henry," Fraser wrote crisply in the *Times*, "the dates don't fit historically" – a verdict that, if true, exposes the novel's premise of Mary having two children by Henry (including a longed-for son) as just a history-warping, Hollywood-friendly fictional device. Surely not?

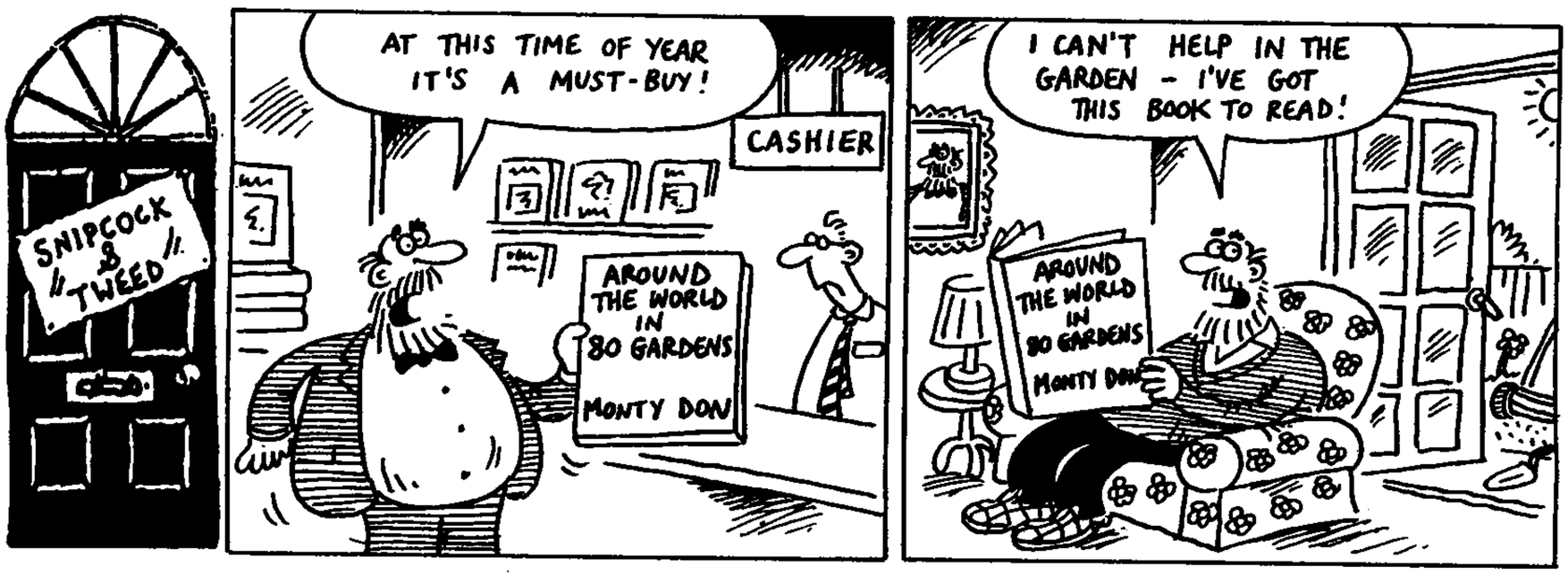
■ IN YET another instance of media-friendliness overriding commonsense, the panel of three judges for the Best of Booker award marking the prize's 40th anniversary absurdly includes Mariella Frostrup.

The choice of winner will turn on whether *Midnight's Children*, which won the 25th birthday Booker of Bookers prize, can hang on against recent competition. However, the now ubiquitous book-show presenter only entered bookish circles (as she's not a reviewer, author or literary editor) as Salman Rushdie's guest at literary banquets – he used to jokingly call her his bodyguard. Modishly combining an expert panel with a public vote (a trial run for the Booker itself?), the award has missed an opportunity to add a more imaginative element – at least one wild-card place in the final six for books that failed to win.

Arguably more impressive than the list of winners, the potential line-up would include *The Black Prince*, *A Bend in the River*, *The Handmaid's Tale*, *Flaubert's Parrot*, *Illywhacker*, *The Stone Diaries*, *Atonement*, *Brick Lane*, *Cloud Atlas*, *Mother's Milk* (all losing shortlistees), plus *Money*, *White Teeth* and *Gould's Book of Fish* (all non-shortlisted). But perhaps that would entail an unbirthday-ish highlighting of a record of spectacular blunders.

■ ALMOST a month has passed since publication of *Rupert's Adventures in China: How Murdoch Lost a Fortune and Found a Wife* by Bruce Dover, who ran the Dirty Digger's Chinese operations in the 1990s. But so far only one British newspaper – the *Financial Times* – has seen fit to review it.

The *FT* thought it important enough to merit a news story as well, since Dover reveals that in 1997 Murdoch wrote a grovelling secret letter to China's president and prime minister apologising for


SNIPCOCK & TWEED
AT THIS TIME OF YEAR IT'S A MUST-BUY!
CASHIER
AROUND THE WORLD IN 80 GARDENS
MONTY DON
I CAN'T HELP IN THE GARDEN - I'VE GOT THIS BOOK TO READ!
AROUND THE WORLD IN 80 GARDENS
MONTY DON

any "misunderstanding" caused by a speech four years earlier in which he said that satellite television posed a threat to totalitarian regimes. The Digger told them he was "alarmed" to hear that his comments were thought to refer to the Chinese regime: "This was never the case... I can assure you that I remain a good friend of China."

The world's other great business newspaper, the *Wall Street Journal*, hasn't followed up this story – or mentioned Dover's book at all. Readers of the *Journal* will have to get used to this, now that it's owned by the Dirty Digger.

Meanwhile the literary editor of the *Australian* (prop. R. Murdoch) confirmed last week that he wouldn't be running a review. When the Australian scandal-sheet *Crikey* asked why not, he replied: "How can I put this diplomatically? Looking at the book and considering its merits and the background and skill sets of the author, we decided not." His counterparts at the *Times* and *Sunday Times* appear to have reached the same "diplomatic" conclusion.

■ AMONG those nominated by Paul Johnson as *Heroes*, in his new book of that title, is none other than, er, Paul Johnson.

"I always have a soft spot for those who speak out against the conventional wisdom," the great sage observes. "For most of my life I have been outspoken myself on these lines, and have suffered accordingly. I think we appreciate heroism ourselves if we have a tiny spark of it ourselves, which might be fanned into a flame if the wind of opportunity arose."

Alas for Paul, the wind of opportunity died down some years ago when he was caught being spanked by tabloid hackette Gloria Stewart – and instantly banned from writing any more moralising why-oh-why sermons on the *Daily Mail*'s leader page. Is this what he means when he complains that he has "suffered accordingly"?

'Bookworm'

Inflated Price

Jordan: Pushed to the Limit

Katie Price

(Century, £18.99)

HERE'S a quiz question: how many famous and successful people can you name who published three volumes of autobiography before the age of 30?

Alexander the Great? Mozart? No, of course not: they were far too busy doing things to sit down and write books. But then the same could be said of Jordan, or Katie Price as she increasingly wishes to be known, presumably to distinguish her from Hashemite kingdoms and brands of breakfast cereal.

Indeed, it may come to pass that Ms Price is the only person in the rich history of human civilisation to have "written" more books than she has read. For she appears to be astonishingly prolific, sharing more with Barbara Cartland, it seems, than too much make-up and a predilection for pink.

Since her second novel, *Crystal*, appeared last summer, she has put her name to seven children's books in the series *Katie Price's Perfect Ponies* (for which she pocketed £300,000), and now comes this third autobiography, covering the two frantic years since the second autobiography, *A Whole New World*. Only last summer we speculated in this column that Rebecca Farnworth, who actually writes these books, may not be a real ghost, as it were, but a pseudonym for a dozen or so mini-ghosts chained to laptops in sweatshops and only allowed to eat when they have churned out 10,000 words. Curiously this new book has no credit for Farnworth or acknowledgement to anyone else at all, although Peter Andre is often described in the text as "my rock".

We start in December 2005. Katie has everything – the man of her dreams, a new baby son, specially cantilevered bras to her own design specification – but she still isn't happy. "I put on a brave face to everyone, but the truth was, even though Junior was seven months old, I still felt I hadn't bonded with him and I didn't know why," she writes.

After her caesarean, when she lost a lot of blood, Katie should have rested. But "while I ate well, I didn't rest. I was under pressure to lose weight, as I was recording my own fitness DVD at the end of August."

Nothing gives her any pleasure, not even her make-up man's gay wedding. "Gary and Phil had gone for an amazing winter wonderland theme, with lots of white and silver, twinkling lights and white mist that swirled around the room... Gary is such a sweet guy that he'd even done my make-up on his own wedding day – he did Barbara Windsor's as well."

At the wedding is one of Peter's exes. "It's not very nice having to be in the same room as someone your other half has gone out with... It's not my fault that Pete's had so many women, so many he's lost count..."

Unfortunately for Pete, though, Katie has gone off sex. "Whenever he suggested we have sex, I'd say, 'No I don't want to'... He kept saying, 'That's fine, I understand.' But then he'd blow it by making a sexy gesture or by saying he was really horny. And I would want to say, 'Well, go and have a wank, then, because I'm not doing anything!'"

She goes to China on a promotional visit. "Everyone was completely fascinated by my boobs! I ended up being voted personality of the year, so I can't complain about the attention, as that's what I wanted after all."

And so it goes on and on and on, for thousands of pages, wittering, rambling, repetitive, self-pitying, unsullied by self-awareness of even the most rudimentary kind. You almost end up feeling sorry for her, this sad, half-witted girl with savage psychological problems, who undergoes surgery every few months because nothing makes her feel better, who marries the only man in Europe even vainer than she is. But every time you start to sympathise, she blows it with some bling-related showing-off or whiny complaints that Chris Moyles didn't play her single on Radio 1.

It all makes for a dispiriting, even gruelling read that probably says more about modern Britain, without meaning to, than any number of skilfully crafted state-of-the-nation novels. But don't worry if you miss it: there'll be another one along in two years' time.

Pseuds Corner

On the marble fireplace are a slew of old invitations and 16 four-leafed clovers framed; sculptures; a collection of orang-utans made out of plaited poppy-seed bread; and on the left a Moby Boxing Glove – a whale as a pincushion of threaded needles. There is also a submerged slate crocodile with a hacksaw blade for teeth; and a seal and a scorpion improvised from Beefeater bottle tops. My favourite is a pale-pink, slightly perished rubber bath-plug, with one triangular link of chain. Its title goes round the rim in Indian ink: Robert Having His Nipple Pierced (Robert Mapplethorpe, 1971).

CRAIG RAINE
'Writers' Rooms', Guardian

As she goes, I swear the light dims. She is a new kind of star, a bright comet, losing bits as she flies, perhaps.

FAY WELDON meets JORDAN
Sunday Times Style Section

Jamie Foxx won his Oscar in my suit. I went to dress him – and I mean literally dress him. I carried the suit personally to LA. I wouldn't let anyone touch it. As I went through airport security I wouldn't even let the rubber on the scanner touch it. I got on the plane and told them not to touch the suit. When I got to the hotel I said "you must have nothing touching the suit." I put it on the hook, unpacked it and even put it on Jamie's back. He told me that he had never experienced anything like it. The suit for me was also a part of that award. I created something for him that expressed everything. It was like my suit had won an Oscar.

OZWALD BOATENG
The Times

Breakfast is everything. The beginning, the first thing. It is the mouthful that is the commitment to a new day, a continuing life. As meals change with the ages, climate and geography, move round the clock, disappear into the night, come back shrunk or instant, breakfast remains a constant, a fixed point all around the world...an unconsidered moment of global communion. *[continues]*

A.A. GILL, flyer for the forthcoming
Breakfast at the Wolseley

Hana Sakuma (Artist) will talk about her conceptual work diffelence (2002) in which the letters 'R' and 'L' have been removed from a bag of tiny alphabetically shaped pasta. The letters 'R' and 'L' do not exist phonetically in Japanese and are difficult to pronounce. Sakuma states 'There is an implicit desire that I want to 'eat' the problem as I would eat the pasta. Then the problem will disappear. I eat the problem, and then I gain energy from it.

LSE lecture series.

Pseuds Corporate

You are not faceless brands, multinational monopolies, or sanitised and defensive incumbents of some dull grey ecosystem. No. You are the mobile mammals. You are the individuals, the entrepreneurs, the artists, the merchants, the craftsmen and women, the smart, ambitious, bright young things of all our mobile tomorrows... We're a community. The Mobile Monday community. And we have got what it takes. And you do know that we are doing something quite special, don't you? Nothing less than the formation and refinement of an entirely new medium. The reinvention of communication for the whole human species.

From a speech delivered by JAMES PEARCE of dotMobi at the world mobile phone conference in Barcelona

CONTRIBUTORS: Stuart Ballantyne, Elaine Darkin, Ken Brough, Strobes, Dave McAllister, Aiden Hansell.

£10 paid for all entries

IN THE BACK

THE SADIQ KHAN INQUIRY

It really buggers belief

Left to right: Sadiq Khan, Mark Kearney, Andy Hayman

AS predicted in the last *Eye*, the official inquiry into the bugging by Scotland Yard of Muslim MP Sadiq Khan was a whitewash.

What we didn't predict was that Sir Christopher Rose, the surveillance commissioner, would do such a good paint job that even the man who commissioned the report, Justice Secretary Jack Straw, is privately unconvinced by it.

Rose swallowed the Met police line that while junior officers knew Khan was a Labour MP when he was bugged in May 2005 and again in June 2006 (he was visiting Babar Ahmad, a constituent being held at Woodhill prison and facing extradition to the US on terrorism charges), they didn't tell their superiors (see below).

This was the same line adopted by the Met after the Stockwell tube shooting of Jean Charles de Menezes, when Met boss Sir Ian Blair was apparently not told by his juniors that police had shot an innocent man. Back then, counter-terrorism chief "Randy" Andy Hayman was centre stage; and now he's there again. Only this time he's the one who was apparently kept in the dark.

This is of course the same Andy Hayman who was judicially admonished in 2006 for authorising the unlawful bugging of phone calls made by a Muslim police officer Ali Dizaei, who resigned in 2007 during an investigation into his expenses and colourful personal life.

In the case of Babar Ahmad and Sadiq Khan, Hayman repeatedly renewed the authority to bug Mr Ahmad's conversations with visitors at Woodhill, including discussions with Mr Khan, who was campaigning loudly against Mr Ahmad's extradition to the US.

Hayman claims he did not know that the Sadiq Khan on the list of approved visitors to be bugged was the very same human rights lawyer-turned-MP with whom he himself had locked horns on numerous occasions since 1999 during the failed corruption probe into Muslim police officer Ali Dizaei and others.

The Rose report does not explain how Mr Khan came to be bugged a second time, when within weeks of the first occasion the Yard had intelligence that "a recently elected MP" was now offering to help Mr Ahmad fight extradition. The simplest check would have shown this could only have been Sadiq Khan.

Mr Khan also told the Rose inquiry that shortly after his election in May 2005 as London's first Muslim parliamentarian, he was one of the "rebels" fighting plans to extend the detention period for terrorist suspects, who Hayman and other senior officers (at Downing Street's request), tried to win over through private briefings.

Jack Straw (who was once spied on by MI5 in his student days) privately supports Khan's view that the Rose report is simply "unbelievable" and told him that had he not been a Muslim MP, he would not have been bugged.

Rose did not speak to key witness Mark Kearney, the former police intelligence officer at Woodhill prison who says in statements that he reluctantly carried out instructions to bug Khan. But Rose personally interviewed Hayman, evidently finding him the more credible.

Kearney, who has spoken out for the first time, told the *Eye*: "I am more than prepared to speak to the government and tell them what parts of the report are wrong. It's a complete whitewash." But they know that already.

BABAR AHMAD EXTRADITION

Arrested development

MORE on the contentious campaign by the US to extradite Babar Ahmad, an IT worker from Tooting, for alleged terrorist activities in the UK.

As the *Eye* has reported, Mr Ahmad has already spent three and a half years in prison fighting extradition and accusations that he conspired to help Islamist terrorists via his website, Azzam.com. His "crimes", supposedly committed in the UK, have already been investigated by British police who decided not to charge him with any offence.

Belatedly, the US authorities have put on trial one of the Americans they accuse of being an accomplice; but the trial has only highlighted the weaknesses in the case against British-born Mr Ahmad, a former computer worker at Imperial College.

In his own time Mr Ahmad ran Azzam.com, an Islamist website which preached that Muslims being persecuted in places like Bosnia and Chechnya should fight back. In 2003, British police raided his home looking for evidence of terrorist connections. They did not launch a prosecution but passed evidence to the US, where the authorities demanded Mr Ahmad's extradition. Though the website had been run from Tooting, it was hosted by an internet service provider in Connecticut. Under US law, said the authorities, soliciting support for Bosnian and Chechen "jihadis" could be be considered "material support" for terrorism.

The US affidavit suggests Mr Ahmad had two US accomplices. The first, a businessman who offered funds to the website, was interviewed but not pursued further. More seriously, information from the Tooting computers showed that in 2001 an American sailor had bought two videos from Azzam.com which showed fighting in Bosnia and Chechnya. The sailor was an American Navy signalman who had converted to Islam and changed his name to Hassan Abujihaad. He had one of the DVDs delivered to him on board his ship, the USS Benfold.

Abujihaad also sent the website a sketch showing how the nine ships in his group would sail through the Straits of Hormuz in March 2001, with the observation that they were vulnerable to attack. This became evidence in the US warrant against Mr Ahmad, suggesting it showed a plot to attack the ships.

However, the ships were not attacked and no evidence has been presented to show that Mr Ahmad tried to arrange an attack.

Abujihaad was honorably discharged from the US navy in 2002. While his limited involvement with Mr Ahmad is central to the extradition warrant, he was not arrested until 2007. US authorities apparently felt that while the sailor's communication with Azzam.com helped justify Mr Ahmad's extradition, it was not enough to actually arrest Abujihaad. Hence his belated arrest last year.

DEEPCUT

Gray Area

WHATEVER happened to the Army Board of Inquiry (BOI) into the death of 17-year-old Geoff Gray, the youngest of the four recruits to die of gunshot wounds at the now condemned Deepcut barracks in Surrey?

After a hearing lasting several months, which last year heard some extraordinary allegations of murder against a named soldier, the BOI report was completed in September. More than five months on, and despite repeated requests from Private Gray's parents, it is still doing the rounds of the army hierarchy.

Now there is a question mark over whether it will ever be made public. An army spokesman told the *Eye* that the report was going through the "usual processes to check that it is in the correct format, to look at recommendations and to get them implemented. As to if or when or if it will be published, I cannot say at this stage."

Pte Gray was found with two gunshot wounds to the forehead, one above each eye, in the early hours of 17 September 2001. He had been on guard at the officers' mess and went on a lone patrol. A few minutes later shots rang out.

A lance corporal told the inquiry that when he arrived at Pte Gray's guard post, one of his fellow recruits was in an agitated state announcing he was "ready to kill". He claimed that the guard's automatic weapon was warm and that he was instructed to unload it. The lance corporal said he believed the guard killed Pte Gray. It was over an hour later before Pte Gray's body was found near the perimeter fence; a weapon and spent cartridges were scattered nearby.

The trouble with this case – as with those of the other dead recruits – was that no prints were taken to ensure that Pte Gray's matched the weapon found nearby. No bullets were recovered to verify if indeed the weapon found was the one that had been fired.

One of the many anomalies in the case, which has so troubled Pte Gray's parents, is that the weapons log, which would have shown which soldier was allocated which gun, was removed from the armoury that night and later shredded.

The lance corporal's evidence, coming so long after the shooting, may well be flawed, but it so shocked Pte Gray's father (also called Geoff) that he immediately alerted Surrey police. He was told these were old allegations that had already been investigated and dismissed as part of their earlier investigations into the deaths. But the Surrey reports remain a secret to all except Nicholas Blake QC, who carried out the less than illuminating review of the affair. And Blake, now a high court judge, made no mention of any such allegation. Blake also dismissed concerns about what happened to Pte Gray's weapon after his death. He attempted to reassure by describing in detail how it was passed between police forces and experts – while all but ignoring the shredded log.

Blake, as Eye readers are aware, concludes that on the balance of probabilities all four recruits killed themselves. In Pte Gray's case, he managed to interpret a stored phone number on Gray's mobile as a suicidal message, when it was actually his pin number. See *Eyes* passim.

The only hint about any previous claims of foul play comes in the detailed reasons given last year for keeping secret yet another investigation into the Deepcut affair – that carried out by Devon and Cornwall police. It was said that their report could cause distress or harm to those named in it against whom allegations have been made. It was also said that it could undermine confidence in the army and its recruit training programmes, as well as Surrey police.

The army said it would eventually make a copy of the Board of Inquiry report available to Pte Gray's family, but the family are not holding their breath that it will shed any light on what happened.

Said Mr Gray: "My concern is that by the time it reaches me, the report will be so well redacted and reduced that it will be meaningless to anyone else but ourselves and the army. The evidence I saw at the board of inquiry says to me that there must be a public inquiry, with full powers to subpoena witnesses. They can't go on hiding behind closed doors."

DNA DATABASE

Base abuse

WHEN Detective Superintendent Stuart Cundy, the man who led the investigation into the murder of Sally Anne Bowman, called for a compulsory national database to be set up containing the DNA records of everyone in Britain, one man who was far from impressed was postman Kevin Reynolds (pictured).

Mr Reynolds' DNA was on the national database (already the world's largest, with 4.5m samples) and he was obviously no match. For the man who did stab and rape Sally Anne, Mark Dixie, was last month sentenced to life imprisonment.

Yet three months after Sally Anne's death in September 2005, Mr Reynolds, then aged 24, was arrested, held for 36 hours, interrogated and placed on two identification parades. Fortunately for him, one witness "identified" another man and a second failed to pick out anyone. But the house of his father, Patrick Reynolds, was literally taken apart, with floor boards ripped up and plasterboard removed, in a two-day search for evidence.

Ironically it was only after further DNA testing and fingerprinting that a traumatised Kevin Reynolds was finally released.

He told the *Eye*: "My heart goes out to the Bowman family, but it makes me very angry that time, money and energy were wasted pursuing me when it was known all along that I could not be the killer. I dread to think what would have happened had one of the witnesses identified me in the line-up. My case shows that the database does not protect innocent people from wrongful arrest and detention."

Mr Reynolds, who has never been convicted of any crime, would rather his records were not on the UK's DNA database at all. He will be one of the first of hundreds of thousands of people who may seek to have their profiles removed if a case currently before the European Court of Human Rights, challenging the retention of the records of innocent people, is successful.

Mr Reynolds' DNA and fingerprints were taken in June 2002 when he was charged with being drunk and disorderly. He was later acquitted. While Dixie's trial for Sally Anne's murder was pending, Mr Reynolds was unable to obtain all the documentation relating to his arrest and detention in 2005. Now that the Old Bailey trial is over, he is making a formal complaint about his treatment to the Independent Police Complaints Commission and suing the Metropolitan Police for wrongful arrest and detention.

THE ACTIS SCANDAL

Tax craven

QUESTION: Which British company manages pound-for-pound to screw poor countries out of more tax than any other? A rapacious bank? A fiendish oil company perhaps?

No. It's the government's own development fund CDC plc, formerly the Commonwealth Development Corporation, whose job is to help the world's poor by sensitive investment of UK development money.

The company's latest accounts show that on worldwide pre-tax profits of £365m the firm paid tax of just £5m, or 1.4 percent, to the governments in whose territories it operates. Why? Because the companies it owns – mainly in power generation, manufacturing and mineral extraction in Africa – are in turn owned through holding companies in tax havens.

CDC's largest single investment, a firm called Globeleq, buys up privatised electricity companies in countries like Tanzania. It is owned through a Bermudan company even though it is run from Houston in Texas.

The tax haven structure makes it easy to shift profits out of the countries where the businesses operate and into the tax-exempt companies. CDC thus deprives developing economies of up to £100m a year. The scamming at the expense of impoverished countries was made possible by the British government.

In 1999, when CDC was lined up for a "public private partnership", it was exempted from UK tax and from anti-tax avoidance laws that would have prevented it stuffing its profits offshore. And who advised the development minister at the time, Clare Short, on such changes? None other than the investment banking arm of Britain's top tax avoider, Barclays.

Laing not short of it

ALTHOUGH the privatisation of CDC remains on hold, the company has transformed itself from mere development fund into a thoroughly modern private equity-style outfit.

Back in 2002 the McKinsey consultancy was brought in for one of its infamous "studies". The result was "strategic business units" of the sort McKinsey tells everybody to adopt – and the sell-off of the fund management arm, renamed Actis, to a few CDC managers for a fraction of its worth.

The *Eye* has documented how the Actis sale made millions for its new owners (who had, er, sold it to themselves). But the CDC director who remained, chief executive Richard Laing, wasn't to be left behind in the pay stakes. While McKinsey was drawing up the Actis bosses' "incentive" schemes, it tailored one for Laing, too. Hey, presto! By 2006 his pay had risen from £230,000 to £860,000.

The McKinsey schemes paid out because Laing and the equally "incentivised" fund managers at Actis shifted CDC's investments from the worthy to the big earners. Thus just 6 percent of CDC's investments now support agriculture, compared to 23 percent in 1999. In its place has stepped privatised power and a new line in shopping centres that climaxes in this month's opening of Ghana's equivalent of Bluewater. In the same period the number of people employed in CDC-owned businesses fell from 34,000 to less than 10,000.

Laing has defended the shopping malls by asking rhetorically: "The middle classes, which are going to be key to the growth of many, many countries, why should they not have a decent shopping mall to invest in?"

"Why not indeed!" retorted a committee of MPs. "The real question however is whether the department for international development, with its legal duty to focus on poverty reduction, should be funding these kinds of projects. We doubt it."

Getting Reicher

CDC and Actis are certainly milking African power generation.

A few weeks ago Actis set up a new $1bn fund into which CDC has shoved the Globeleq empire. At its usual rates for managing a new fund, Actis will bag $25m every year as well as a big slice of any profits when the power companies are sold.

The move emerged from a review of Globeleq by Actis partner Andrew Reicher "to achieve value from the underlying operations". He concluded that it should be moved over to the juicy new fund and its new chief executive should be, er, him.

Reicher has years of investment banking experience but none of running power companies, which doesn't augur well for a company that War on Want has already condemned as increasing poverty by increasing electricity prices. Actis/CDC also stands accused by the Ugandan government of failing to invest what it promised when it bought the state-owned electricity company four years ago.

LOCKERBIE APPEAL

Meddling Miliband

THE international observer appointed by the United Nations has all but accused the government of a cover-up over the Lockerbie bombing.

Dr Hans Koechler last week condemned a decision by Foreign Secretary David Miliband to sign a public interest immunity (PII) certificate preventing disclosure of at least one document, believed to be crucial to the defence of Ali Mohmed al-Megrahi, jailed for life for the 1988 atrocity, which killed 270 people when Pan Am flight 103 was blown up.

In an unprecedented attack, Koechler said the continued withholding of evidence makes Megrahi's appeal impossible and the issuing of a PII certificate "tantamount to political interference" in the Scottish appeal courts.

The secret document apparently relates indirectly to the timer alleged to have detonated the bomb and said to incriminate Megrahi and Libya. Originating from an unspecified "foreign" country, the document formed one of the six grounds identified by the Scottish Criminal Cases Review Commission (SCCRC) for concluding that Megrahi may be innocent. Furthermore, the SCRCC ruled that the suppression of the document and other evidence at his trial was in itself also a ground for appeal, raising serious questions about whether it was police or prosecutors, or both, who sat on crucial evidence.

During the Fatal Accident Inquiry into the disaster back in late 1990, the then Conservative government issued no fewer than five PII certificates to keep evidence secret. Two related to the explosive device and one related to confidential communications from other governments – which may now cover the material said to cast doubt on the conviction.

The Scottish Lord Advocate, Elish Angiolini, has now indicated that she wants to release the document to ensure that Megrahi gets a fair hearing, but she has in effect been overruled.

Said Koechler: "The persistent refusal of the UK government to allow disclosure of vital evidence to the defence points in the direction of a cover-up." In light of the "irregularities at the Lockerbie trial and appeal in the Netherlands", he said there should now be an investigation under a UN mandate.

FOLLOW-UP...

■ MANSOOR HASSAN: The Pakistani investigative journalist who fled to Britain in 2002 after receiving death threats in his own country (see *Eye* 1122, December 2004) has finally won his fight to stay.

Hassan was beaten up, poisoned and had his car rammed after he exposed political corruption in the Punjab. British immigration adjudicators accepted much of his story; but they said he should have fled to another part of Pakistan, rather than the UK, and wanted to deport Hassan and his family.

After a long campaign the government will allow Hassan to stay in Manchester, but not by granting asylum. Instead he is what is called a "legacy case": given leave to remain because his family members can show they have settled, integrated and contributed to their local community. The Home Office announced in December that it would review 19,000 "legacy cases", allowing these older claims to stay as long as they fit the new criteria

In the City

TAXPAYERS already overjoyed at the £55bn handout they are providing to Northern Wreck depositors and lenders will be even happier to know that they are now the proud owners of a bank in an offshore tax haven whose deposits from non-UK taxpayers they are also guaranteeing.

This bizarre outcome of the nationalisation of Northern Wreck comes about because the building society that thought it was a bank not only owns operations in Ireland and Denmark but has for more than a decade owned an untrumpeted, much bigger banking subsidiary in Guernsey.

"Looks like someone's anticipating a crash"

Northern Rock (Guernsey) has been in business since 1996 and at the end of 2006 boasted deposits of £2.1bn. Like many of the 47 "banks" in Guernsey, it is little more than a processing centre for mainly online and postal deposit business, which is passed on to its parent company.

Total deposits in Guernsey have grown from under £50bn in 1997 to £119bn last year. UK and other EU citizen depositors either have to declare their interest to home tax authorities or pay a withholding tax. But for non-EU depositors looking to avoid or evade tax, Guernsey is still open for business.

However, the nationalisation of its parent means that the Guernsey bank is now effectively owned by the UK government and indirectly run by the Treasury. So HMG is now in the offshore business, which, through Revenue & Customs, it is constantly trying to restrict if not close down.

That may be less than reassuring to those of NRG's customers concerned about confidentiality and any possible exchanges of information, no matter what may be said about "business as usual" by the Guernsey authorities with the local bank staying independent. It is, after all, a wholly owned subsidiary and so answerable to the main board in Newcastle, who are now answerable to the Treasury.

HMRC is already pressing all UK-based financial institutions with offshore operations for details of their customers after Barclays was ordered to hand over client data. Some observers believe this cannot be resisted if account details are held in or accessible through the UK parent. Whether local directors can be ordered to comply if it is not may depend on local bank secrecy laws and whether these trump any demand from the parent bank. But who is to stop a Liechtenstein-style data grab by HMRC either with or without a court order?

But it is not all bad news. Prior to Northern Wreck imploding, the £2bn deposited in NRG was not covered by the Financial Services Compensation Scheme but was dependent on a guarantee from the parent company, which last September became worthless. But all deposits in NRG were in effect covered by the Treasury's 100 percent guarantee to Northern Wreck investors last September. This guarantee extends up to the level of NRG's deposits with its parent at the date of the Treasury guarantee. NRG deposits all its money with Northern Wreck, so it was treated like any other wholesale depositor.

This arrangement has been confirmed post-nationalisation. The only difference is that whereas for Northern Wreck accounts that guarantee is open-ended, which is why investors are now rushing to put their money back into the bank rather than queuing to take it out, for NRG the guarantee is limited to the total amount it had with the parent last September.

Even so, the net result is that the UK taxpayer is in effect guaranteeing the deposits of non-UK taxpayers and even possibly tax evaders. Another triumph for Gordon Brown and Alistair Darling.

THE £100m belonging to British tax evaders being hunted by HMRC in the very much onshore tax haven of Liechtenstein, with the aid of stolen client data bought for £100,000 from a former employee of the trust department of its biggest bank LGT, will certainly embarrass members of the British-Liechtenstein All-Party Parliamentary Group.

Established only four years ago, the group is headed by Tory MP Edward Garnier, who is also friendly towards another tax haven, Gibraltar. The group includes 10 Labour MPs and peers as well as nine Tories and the Lib Dems' Lembit Opik.

Members of the group visited the Alpine tax haven in 2005 and 2007 as guests of the Liechtenstein government and its less than powerful parliament.

Another unamused observer of the HMRC campaign will no doubt be Bryan Jeeves, a driving force behind the foundation of the all-party parliamentary group. A British national and Tory supporter, his Jeeves Group is one of LGT's rivals in the local trust and company management business.

For almost 10 years from 1992, Jeeves was the honorary British consul in Liechtenstein and was awarded an OBE in 1993 for "services rendered". Our man Jeeves was honoured again in the 2007 New Year Honours, receiving a CMG "**in recognition of his services rendered to the financial services sector in St Vincent and the Grenadines**". Another tax haven– this time in the Caribbean.

Jeeves was described by the Liechtenstein foreign minister as "**the personification of Britain in Liechtenstein**". Last year he was awarded the Commander's Cross of the Princely Liechtenstein Order of Merit for services rendered to Liechtenstein.

Jeeves proudly states on his group's website that he continues to support Britain diplomatically and politically in Vaduz. He may have his work cut out as HMRC go after LGT clients back home. Undoubtedly the Jeeves clientele includes no tax evaders as he only offers legal, tax-efficient services.

British banks are less celebratory about their Liechtenstein links. Two have traceable operations in Liechtenstein: Royal Bank of Scotland, which controls RBS Coutts Trustees AG and Bank von Ernst ("wealth management services with a high level of personal service and discretion"), and Barclays, which controls a Vaduz company called BPB Trust AG, an expert in setting up foundations – the type of opaque entity used by the LGT tax evaders.

BPB is one of several major Liechtenstein trust companies run by the Batliner family and founded by Professor Dr Herbert Batliner in the 70s as the world's rich increasingly shifted cash out of their own countries. Batliner's many claims to fame include allegedly handling political slush funds for Germany's former Chancellor Helmut Kohl, as well as acting for less reputable clients such as fugitive financier Marc Rich and Ecuadorean drug baron Jorge Hugo Reyes Torres. Last year Batliner paid a fine in Germany to settle tax fraud charges.

Although Batliner has reportedly retired to spend more time with his art collection, the family pedigree and connections remain highly valued by the world's "private bankers". Barclays' BPB Trust AG is run by Angelika Moosleithner-Batliner, daughter of the great pioneer.

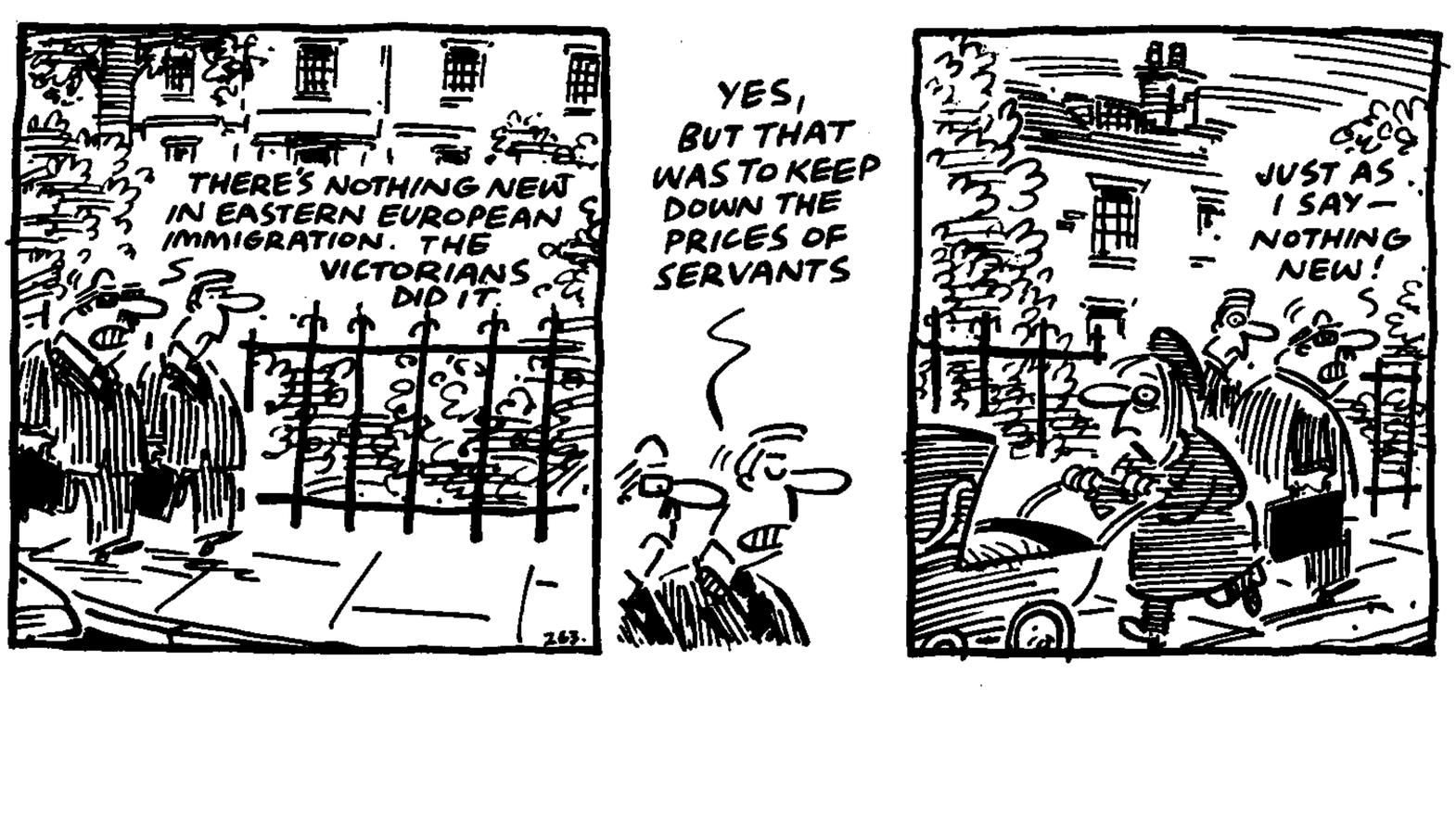
Barclays would rather keep quiet about its operations at Äulestrasse 74, Vaduz. While its Barclays Wealth division declares activities in Switzerland, Monaco and other tax havens, it gives no indication of its Liechtenstein trust company, reference to which can only be found buried in filings in the US (British regulators don't require the divulgence of anything so embarrassing).

NOBODY has any doubt these days about the power of Russia, especially in the energy sphere. So those who want to do business there are attuned to Moscow's sensitivities. No energy group is perhaps more entwined with Russia and its state-controlled gas giant, Gazprom, than the German energy group E.On, which owns Powergen in the UK. E.On is an investor in Gazprom and its partner in the proposed Nord Stream gas pipeline from Russia to Germany under the Baltic, as well as bidding to enter the Russian electricity market. Gazprom's former chairman, Dmitry Medvedev, has just been elected Russia's next president.

All of which may explain why last year, after Gazprom cut off supplies to Ukraine and another row resulted in problems with Belarus, E.On took a somewhat different view of the risks of being so reliant on Russian gas supplies in the disclosures it gave to shareholders in Europe and in the US, where it was listed until last September.

In its Form-20F filing with the Securities & Exchange Commission regulator – required because of its then Wall Street listing – E.On highlighted among the risk factors investors should consider "concerns about the reliability of Russian gas supplies, on which E.On Ruhrgas depends" for 30 percent of its supply. Any disruption of those supplies on their way through intermediate countries from Russia "can have a material effect", it stated.

However, no such explicit Russian reference appeared in the risk report section of the 2006 E.On annual report or subsequent quarterly reports. It will be interesting to see whether this obvious oversight is corrected when the 2007 annual report is produced this week. As E.On is now delisted from Wall Street, there will be no more requirements to comply with the somewhat more onerous demands of the Form-20F.


THE DIRECTORS
DREDGE & RIGG
THERE'S NOTHING NEW IN EASTERN EUROPEAN IMMIGRATION. THE VICTORIANS DID IT.
YES, BUT THAT WAS TO KEEP DOWN THE PRICES OF SERVANTS
JUST AS I SAY— NOTHING NEW!

PLANET FOOTBALL

Fabio Capello

ONE name missing from the hysterical debate about "non-doms" fleeing Britain is the just-arrived England manager, Fabio Capello. Faced by news of a tax investigation in his native Italy, the Football Association rushed to declare that Capello would be paying full UK income tax and National Insurance on his £6m annual salary. After all, he is an employee so he must pay PAYE in the same way as all the members of the foreign legion who play and manage in the Premier League… and, if he lasts seven years – unlikely – the proposed £30,000 annual levy as a "non-dom".

For now his Italian or offshore assets and income will stay UK tax-free (but disclosable?) so long as they are not remitted to Britain. And why should they, given that salary? Tax experts believe Capello will be classed as both resident and ordinarily resident for British tax, given the amount of time he will have to spend here beyond the new 90-day restriction and the length of his contract.

HOW JOURNALISM WORKS

ONCE again the *Guardian* has belatedly "uncovered" a *Private Eye* story and made it its own.

"Tesco's £1bn tax avoiding plan – move to the Cayman Islands" was the front-page headline last week announcing the result of a "six-month *Guardian* investigation" by Ian Griffiths and Felicity Lawrence. That investigation followed a year after the first disclosure of Tesco's Cayman connection in a *Dispatches* TV documentary in February 2007. The supermarket giant's use of companies in the Caymans to avoid tax on the sale and leaseback of its stores was then fully detailed in *Eye* 1180.

This is the third time in recent months that the *Guardian* has ripped off an *Eye* story. First there was its claim to have exposed Sir John Bourn's lavish expenses, followed in November by the tale of the unrewarded charity for disabled children at the centre of Northern Wreck's £50bn-plus Jersey-based Granite securitisation operation. This front-page disclosure was penned by Ian Cobain and Ian Griffiths two months after it appeared in *Eye* 1194.

FOLLOWING their jail sentences last month, the defenders and PR spinmasters for the NatWest Three have been eager to say how their campaign was never about their innocence and only about the unfair Anglo-US extradition treaty.

So, emotive headlines such as "How can I tell our girls Daddy is being sent to an American jail – even though there's not a scrap of evidence against him" (*Mail on Sunday*) or "My son will rot in a Texas jail" and "Blair told to stop affront to justice" (*Daily Telegraph*), and stories beneath words such as "We are being royally shafted" (*Sunday Times*), "Is this justice?" (*Guardian*), "We demand justice" (*Daily Mail*) were clearly written about three different and innocent bankers.

'Slicker'

EYE CROSSWORD 360

by Cyclops

£100 prize to first correct solution opened on 14 March 2008

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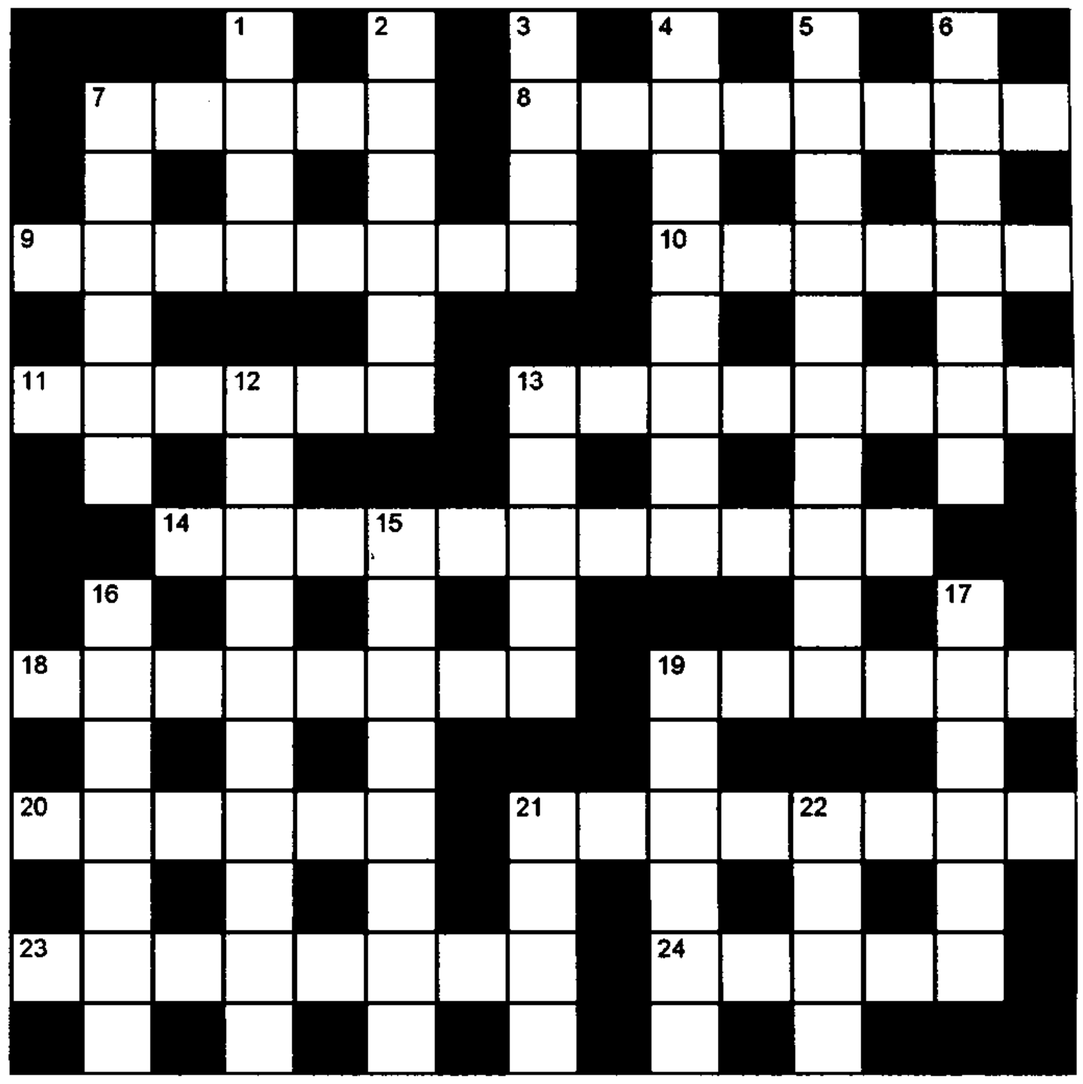


ACROSS

7 See 14ac.

8 It's up pedant's nuts, not milked (8)

9 Pants worn by churchwarden, possibly producing awful row when squeezed? (8)

10 Tossing your penis, love is lacking, a poor state indeed (6)

11 Bonkers discussing this country? (6)

13 Head back for House with PM's right wing – that is friendliness! (8)

14/7 "I had sex romp with celebrity 'X' plus William (who shot his bolt) and Scotland's top politician"? (4,3,4,5)

18 Clearly not up for it, in a shiftless way (8)

19 Balls, possibly after taking grass, put out (6)

20 All drink contains 75% torment! (3,3)

21 Report of bollocks on show is very critical (5,3)

23 Croak "Festival!" (8)

24 See 21dn.

DOWN

1/22 Perhaps Windsor assists sailor in the bath? (4,4)

2 Eye problem: Cyclops's composition ends with 1 across? (6)

3/13 Toothy character in shorts puts listening device in hostess's cleavage, say? (4,5)

4 Nepotist snapped "Stop crawling!" (4,2,2)

5 Not a fast deliverer of Alastair Campbell's business hat (4,6)

6 Beer ad about to rope in independent fungus-grower (7)

7 Rugged Roger, heartless bloke (6)

12 Skewer tongue as a beauty aid? (4,6)

13 See 3dn.

15 Narcotic, endless sex – one gets very into partner (8)

16 Cocky sort who gives great oral sex? (7)

17 Glitzy thing in use, ballsed up without question (6)

19 Viceroys' bags split by American wife (6)

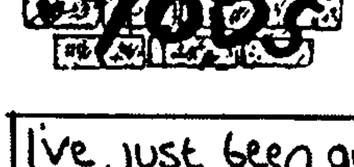
21/24 Dumbo's hen bash (4-5)

22 See 1dn.

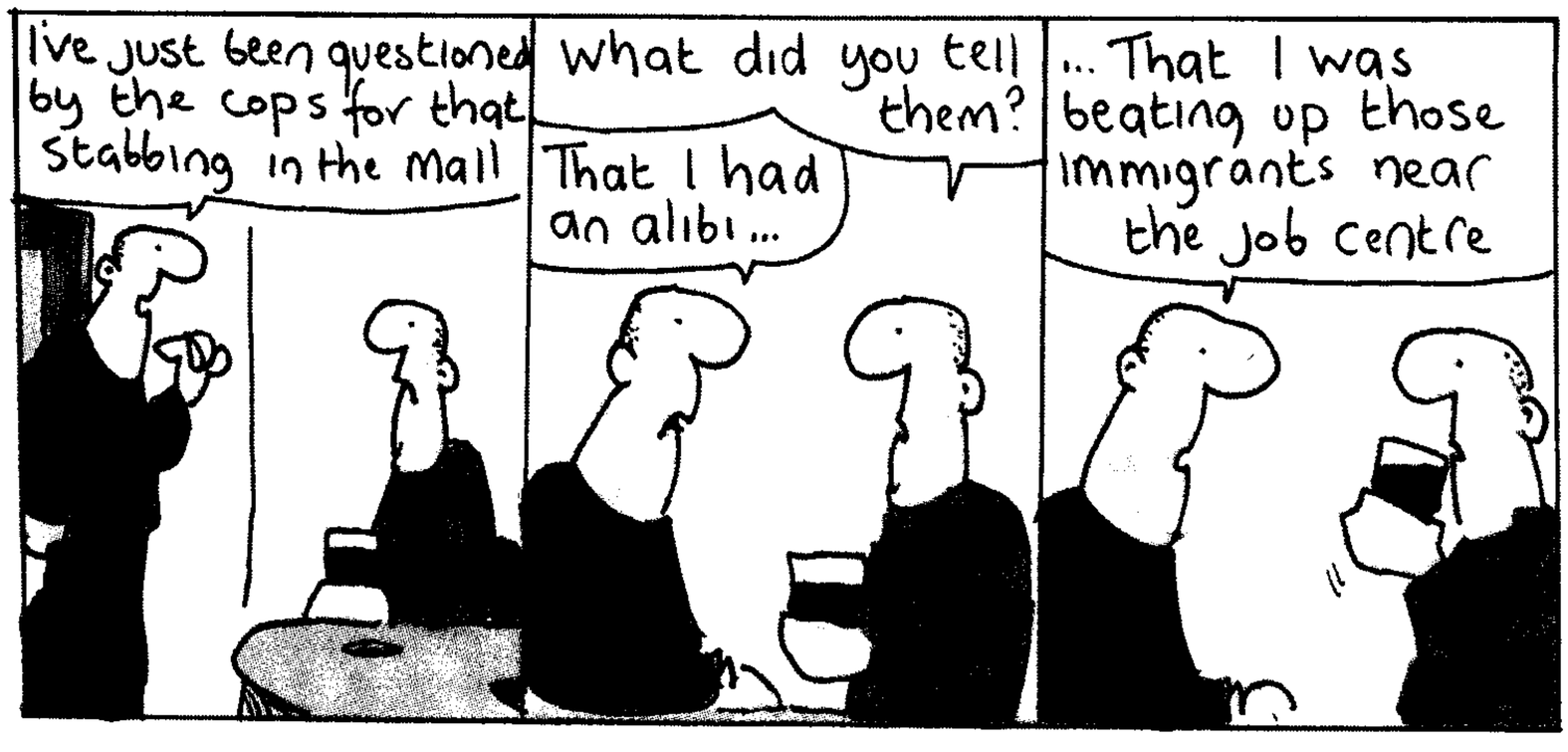
Crossword 359 winner: ALAN WALKER

ACROSS: 7 Beheaded 8 Mongol 9 Dipso 10 Strapping 12 Uterus 13 Patella 16/26 Oscar acceptance speech 19 Session 21 Doodah 23 Corn dolly 25 Behan.

DOWN: 1 Chopsticks 2 Labourer 3 Census 5 Ugli 6 Flagwaver 7 Body 11 Rupee 14/4 Lancashire Hotpot 15/27 Worst-case scenario 17 Canal 18 Trombone 20 Il Duce 21 Dry ice 22 Undo 24 Reef.



HUSBAND


I've just been questioned by the cops for that stabbing in the mall
What did you tell them?
That I had an alibi...
...That I was beating up those immigrants near the job centre

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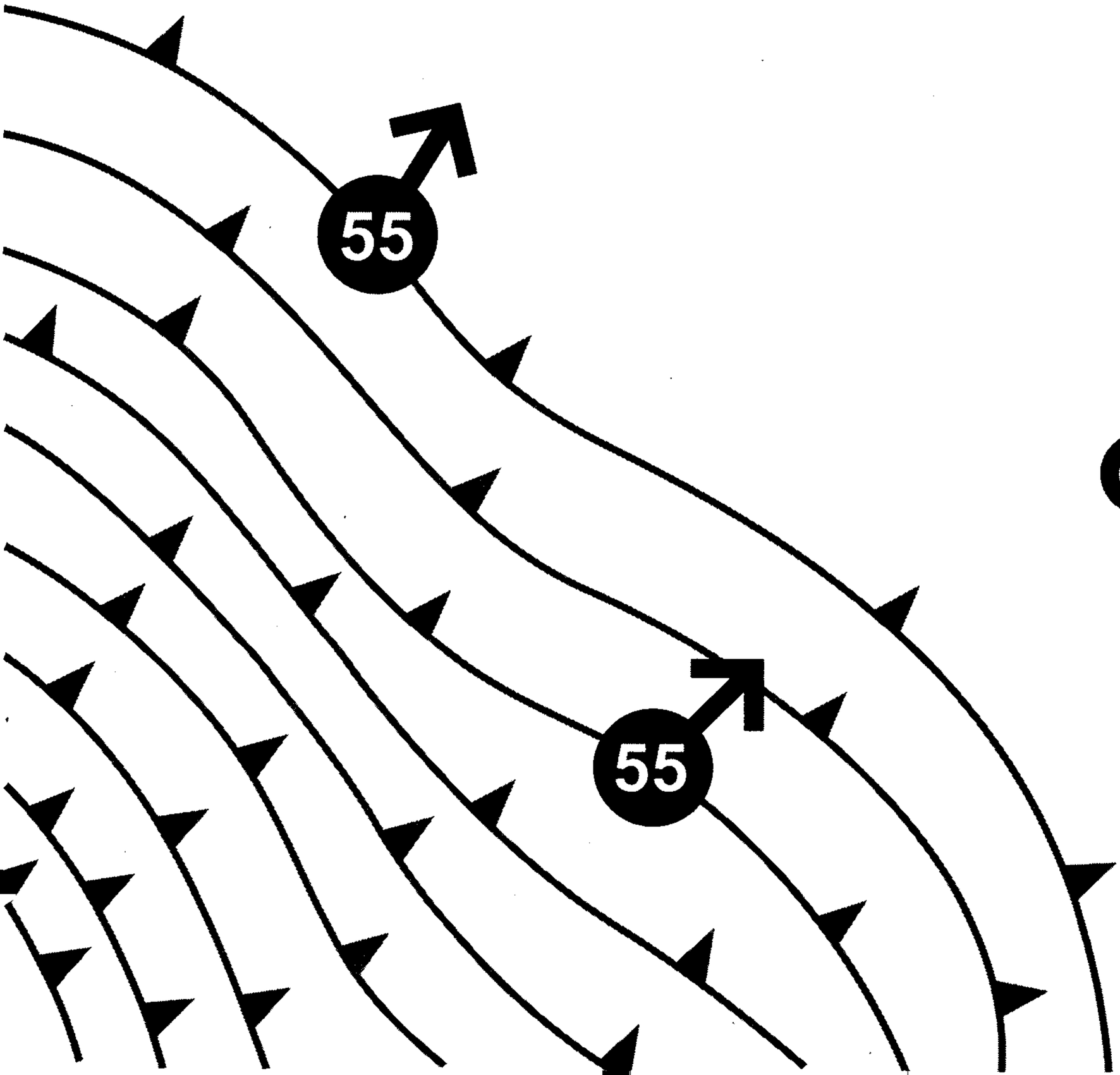

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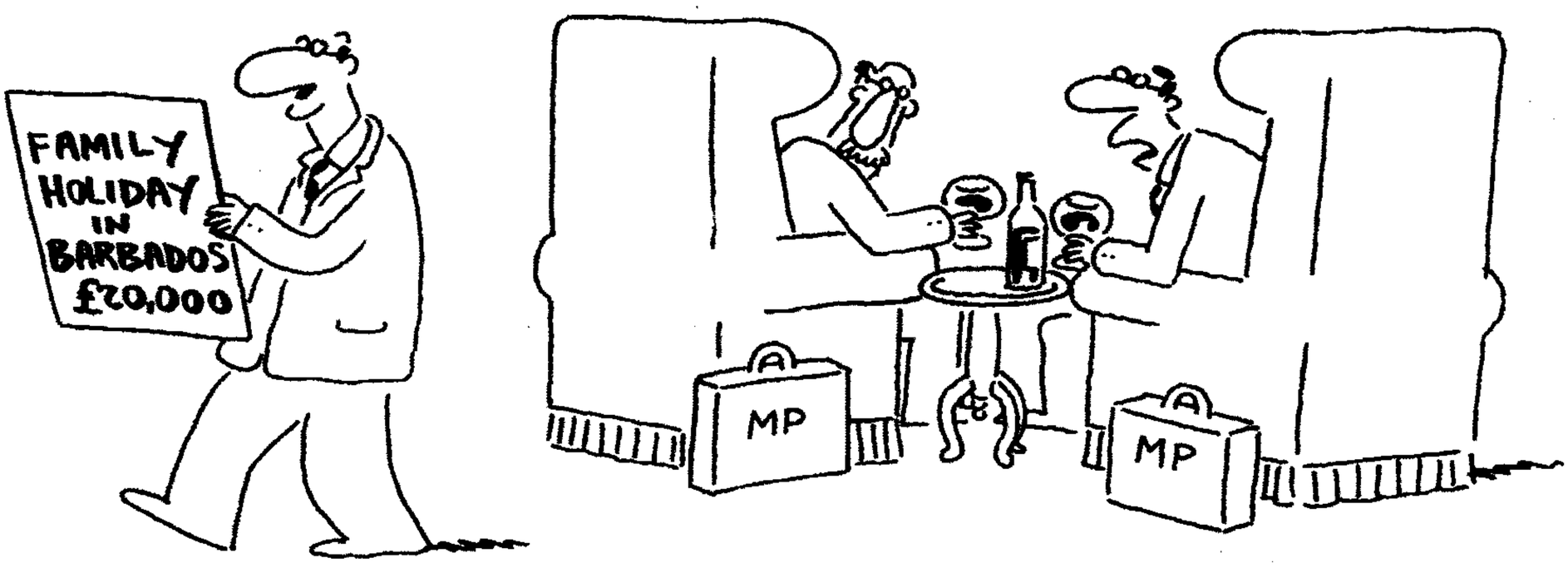

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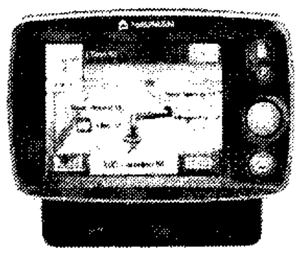

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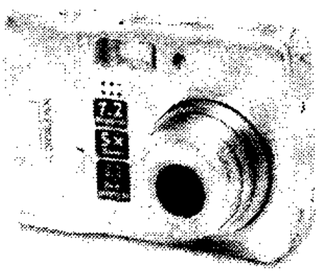

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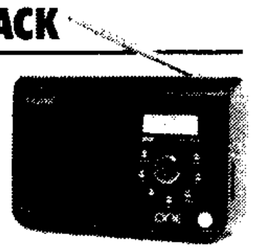

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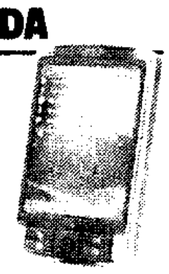

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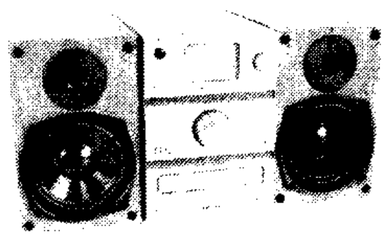

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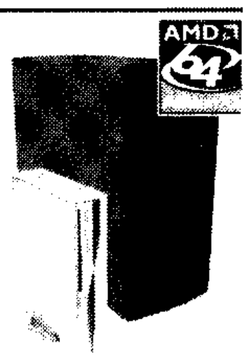

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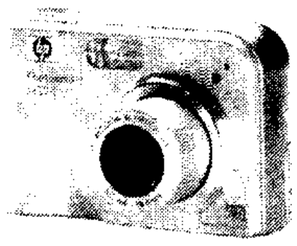

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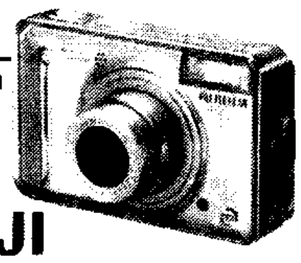

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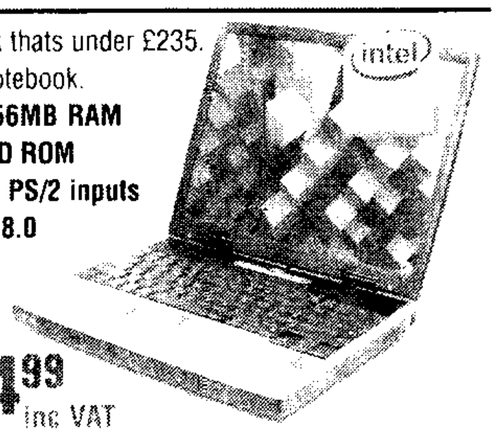

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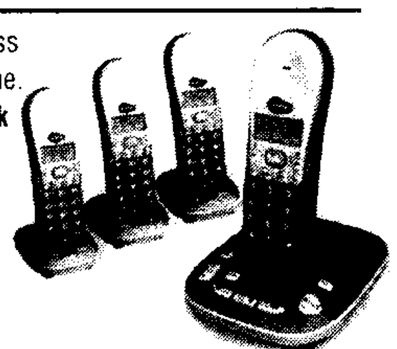

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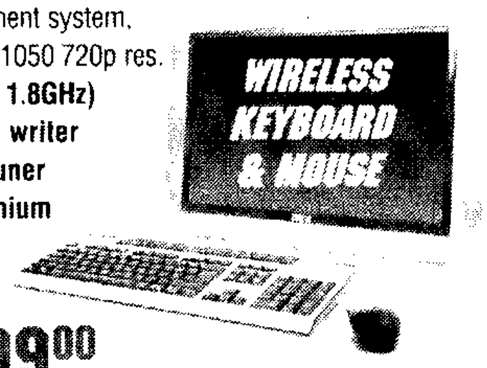

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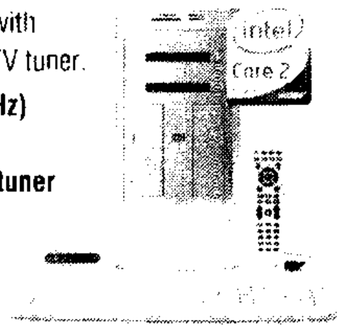

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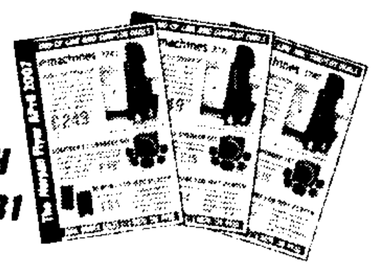

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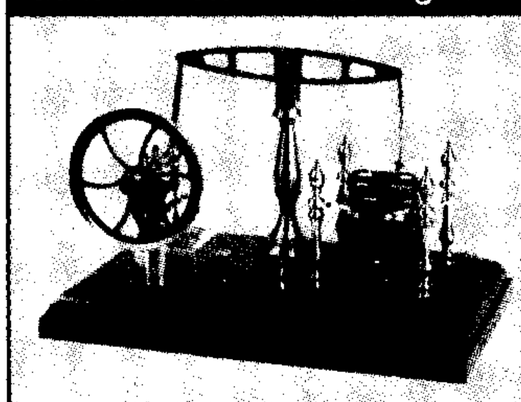

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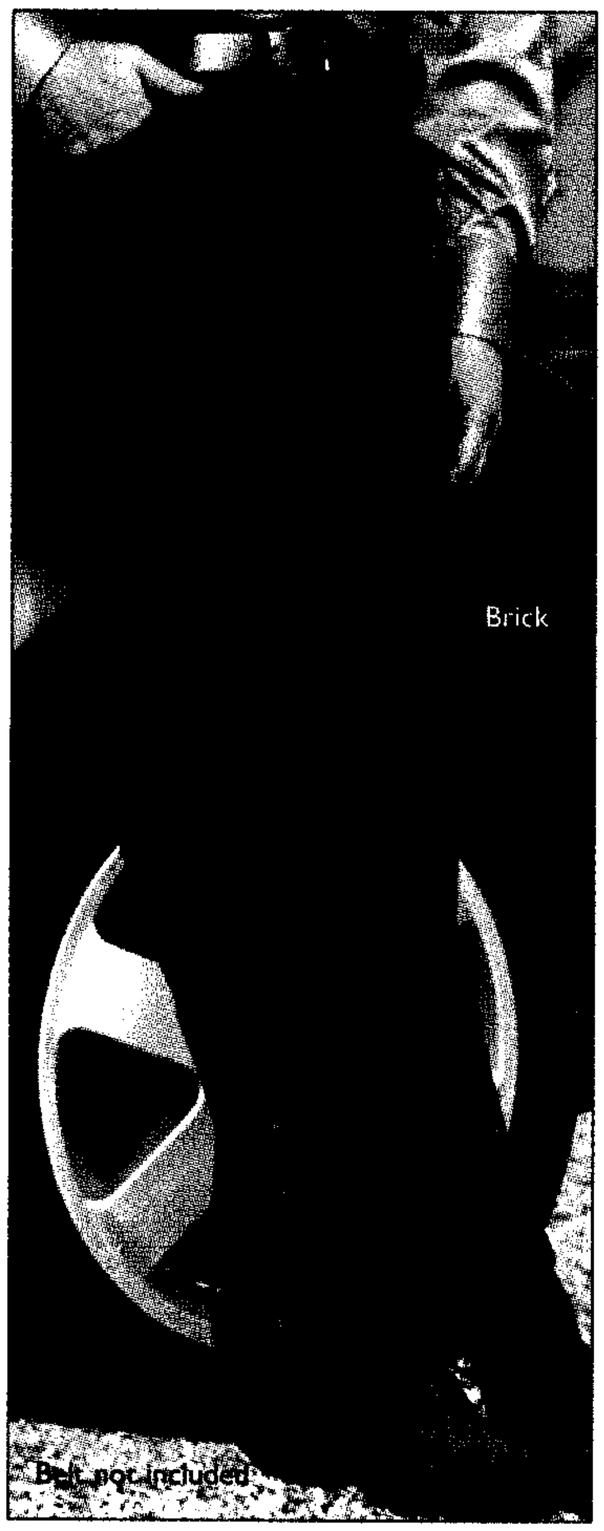

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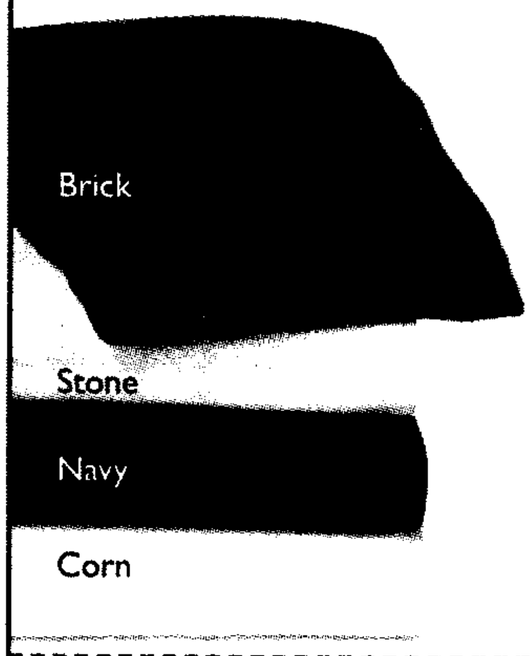

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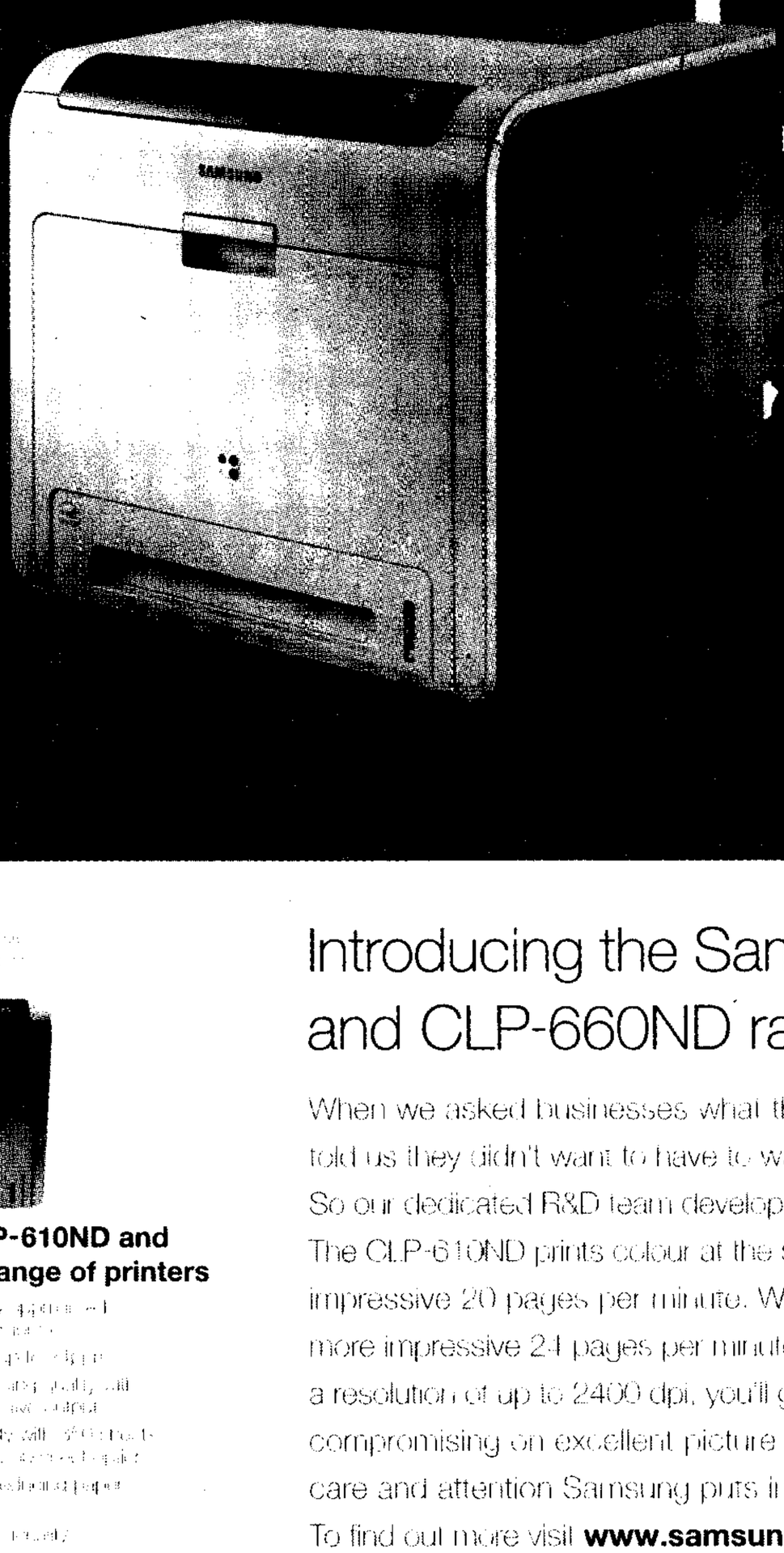

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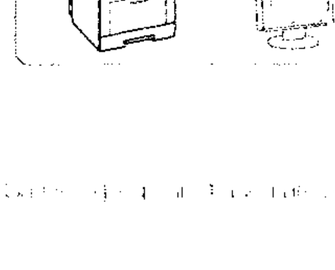

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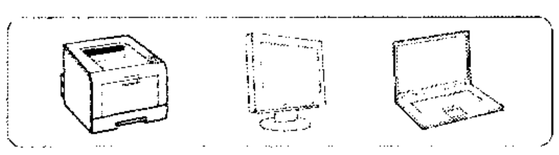

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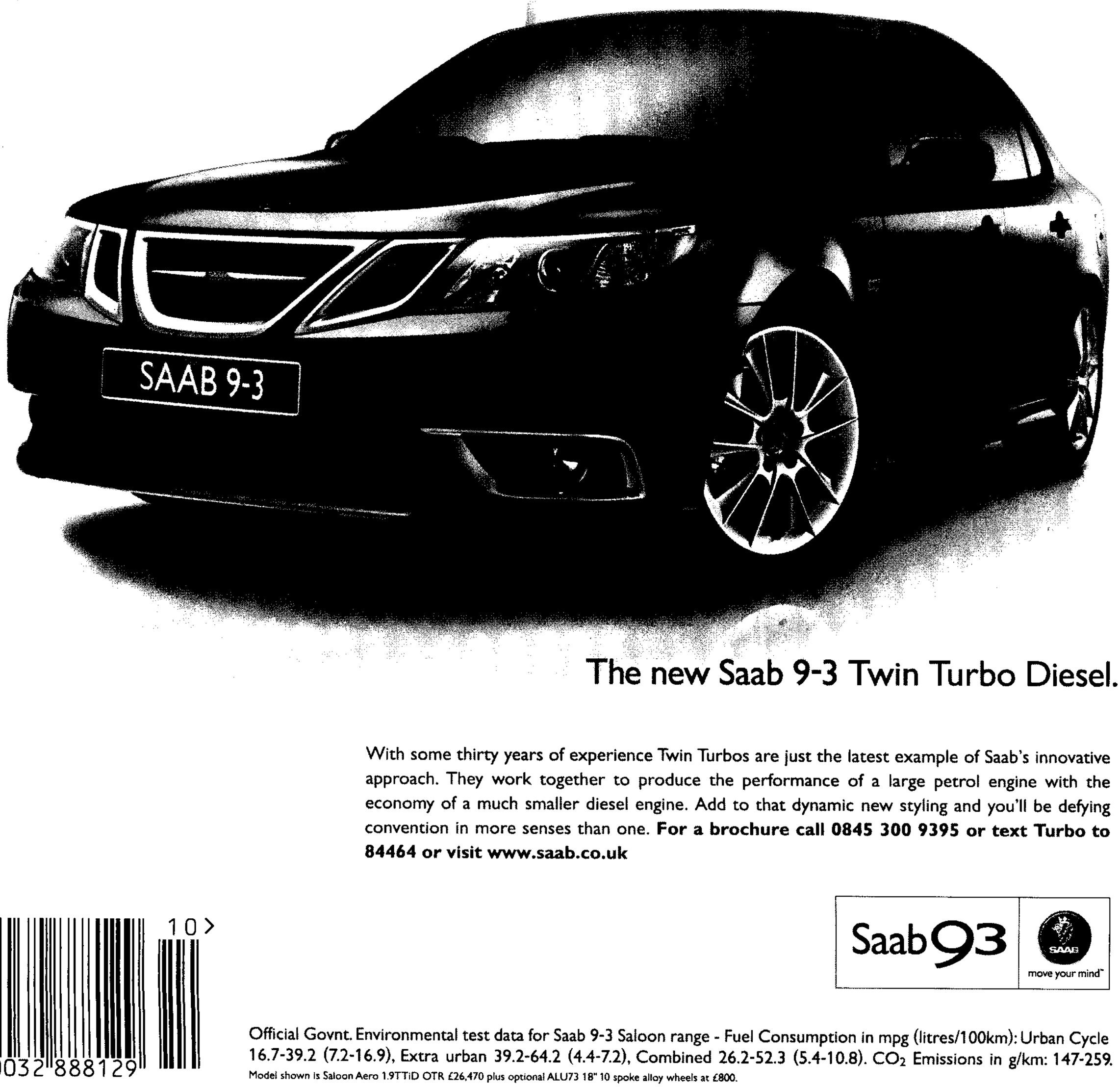

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Model shown is Saloon Aero 1.9TTiD OTR £26,470 plus optional ALU73 18" 10 spoke alloy wheels at £800.